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Leaves in the wind

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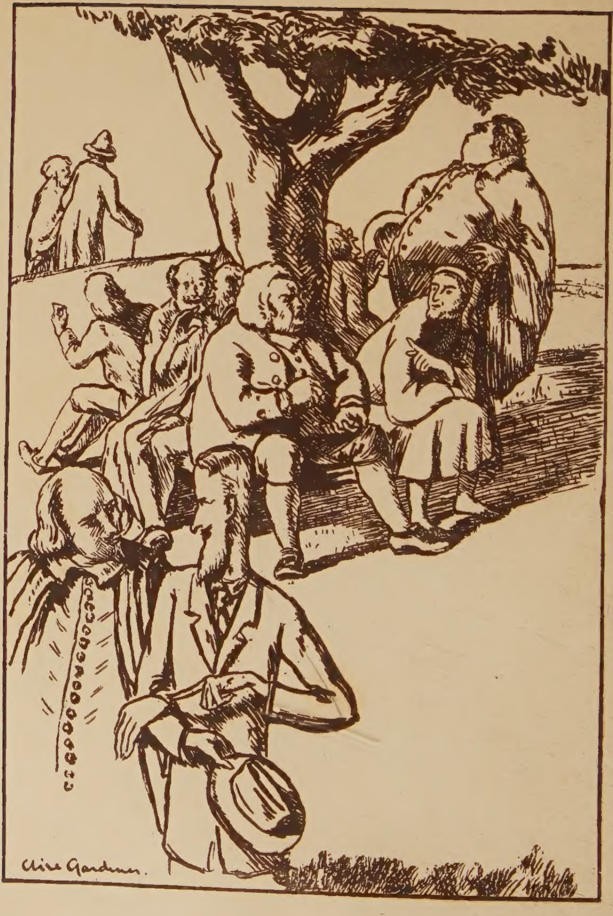
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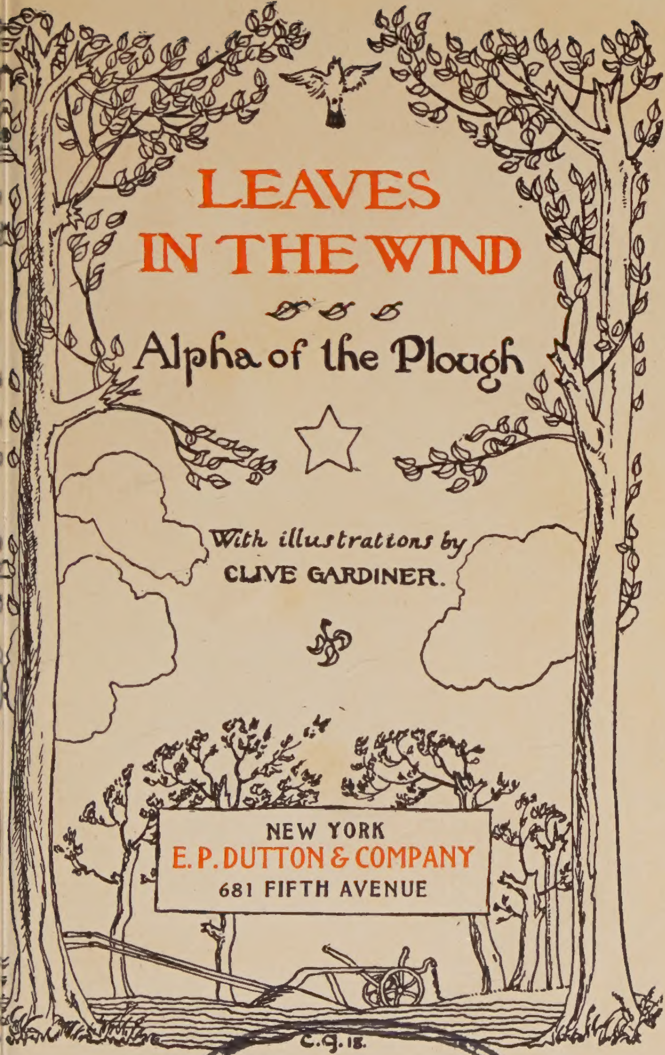

LEAVES IN THE WIND

Alpha of the Plough

With illustrations by
CLIVE GARDINER.

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
681 FIFTH AVENUE

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TO MY CHILDREN

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The welcome given to "Pebbles on the Shore" is the excuse for this volume, collected for the most part from the same source, the columns of *The Star* and other papers, in which the articles appeared from week to week. Some of them have been extended and a few are now published for the first time. The leaves are slight, and if they have any collective value it is as symptoms of the wind that blows them. They were written during the third and fourth years of the War, and in some measure reflect, incidentally rather than intentionally, the emotional experiences of the most disquieting period of the struggle.

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LEAVES IN THE WIND

A FELLOW TRAVELLER

I do not know which of us got into the carriage first. Indeed I did not know he was in the carriage at all for some time. It was the last train from London to a Midland town—a stopping train, an infinitely leisurely train, one of those trains which give you an understanding of eternity. It was tolerably full when it started, but as we stopped at the suburban stations the travellers alighted in ones and twos, and by the time we had left the outer ring of London behind I was alone—or, rather, I thought I was alone.

There is a pleasant sense of freedom about being alone in a carriage that is jolting noisily through the night. It is liberty and unrestraint in a very agreeable form. You can do anything you like. You can talk to yourself as loud as you please and no one will hear you. You can have that argument out with Jones and roll him triumphantly in the dust without fear of a counterstroke. You can stand on your head and no one will see you. You can sing, or dance a two-step, or practise a golf stroke, or play marbles on the floor without let or hindrance. You can open the window or shut it without provoking a protest. You can open both windows or shut both. Indeed, you can go on opening them and shutting them as a sort of festival of freedom. You can have any corner you choose and try all of them in turn. You can lie at full length on the cushions and enjoy the luxury of breaking the regulations and possibly the heart of D.O.R.A. herself. Only D.O.R.A. will not know that her heart is broken. You have escaped even D.O.R.A.

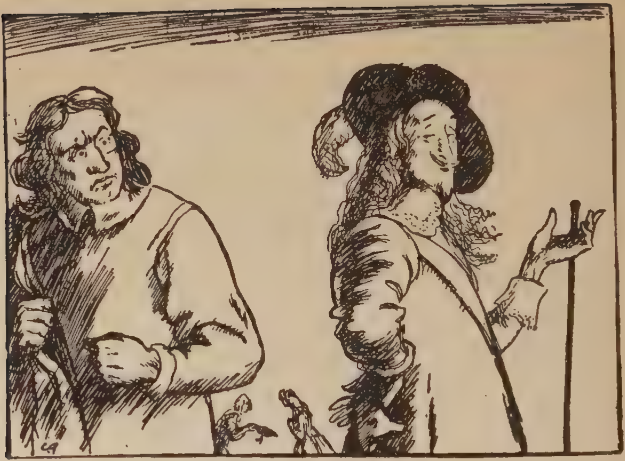
On this night I did not do any of these things. They did not happen to occur to me. What I did was much more ordinary. When the last of my fellow-passengers had gone I put down my paper, stretched my arms and my legs, stood up and looked out of the window on the calm summer night through which I was journeying, noting the pale reminiscence of day that still lingered in the northern sky; crossed the carriage and looked out of the other window; lit a cigarette, sat down, and began to read again. It was then that I became aware of my fellow traveller. He came and sat on my nose. . . . He was one of those wingy, nippy, intrepid insects that we call, vaguely, mosquitoes. I flicked him off my nose, and he made a tour of the compartment, investigated its three dimensions, visited each window, fluttered round the light, decided that there was nothing so interesting as that large animal in the corner, came and had a look at my neck.

I flicked him off again. He skipped away, took another jaunt round the compartment, returned, and seated himself impudently on the back of my hand. It is enough, I said; magnanimity has its limits. Twice you have been warned that I am someone in particular, that my august person resents the tickling impertinences of strangers. I assume the black cap. I condemn you to death. Justice demands it, and the court awards it. The counts against you are many. You are a vagrant; you are a public nuisance; you are travelling without a ticket; you have no meat coupon. For these and many other misdemeanours you are about to die. I struck a swift, lethal blow with my right hand. He dodged the attack with an insolent ease that humiliated me. My personal vanity was aroused. I lunged at him with my hand, with my paper; I jumped on the seat and pursued him round the lamp; I adopted tactics of feline cunning, waiting till he had alighted, approaching with a horrible stealthiness, striking with a sudden and terrible swiftness.

It was all in vain. He played with me, openly and ostentatiously, like a skilful matador finessing round an infuriated bull. It was obvious that he was enjoying himself, that it was for this that he had disturbed my repose. He wanted a little sport, and what sport like being chased by this huge, lumbering windmill of a creature, who tasted so good and seemed so helpless and so stupid? I began to enter into the spirit of the fellow. He was no longer a mere insect. He was developing into a personality, an intelligence that challenged the possession of this compartment with me on equal terms. I felt my heart warming towards him and the sense of superiority fading. How could I feel superior to a creature who was so manifestly my master in the only competition in which we had ever engaged? Why not be magnanimous again? Magnanimity and mercy were the noblest attributes of man. In the exercise of these high qualities I could recover my prestige. At present I was a ridiculous figure, a thing for laughter and derision. By being merciful I could reassert the moral dignity of man and go back to my corner with honour. I withdraw the sentence of death, I said, returning to my seat. I cannot kill you, but I can reprieve you. I do it.

I took up my paper and he came and sat on it. Foolish fellow, I said, you have delivered yourself into my hands. I have but to give this respectable weekly organ of opinion a smack on both covers and you are a corpse, neatly sandwiched between an article on "Peace Traps" and another on "The Modesty of Mr. Hughes." But I shall not do it. I have reprieved you, and I will satisfy you that when this large animal says a thing he means it. Moreover, I no longer desire to kill you. Through knowing you better I have come to feel—shall I say?—a sort of affection for you. I fancy that St. Francis would have called you "little brother." I cannot go so far as that in Christian charity and civility. But I recognise a more distant relationship. Fortune has made us fellow-travellers on this summer night. I have interested you and you have entertained me. The obligation is mutual and it is founded on the fundamental fact that we are fellow mortals. The miracle of life is ours in common and its mystery too. I suppose you don't know anything about your journey. I'm not sure that I know much about mine. We are really, when you come to think of it, a good deal alike—just apparitions that are and then are not, coming out of the night into the lighted carriage, fluttering about the lamp for a while and going out into the night again. Perhaps. . . .

"Going on to-night, sir?" said a voice at the window. It was a friendly porter giving me a hint that this was my station. I thanked him and said I must have been dozing. And seizing my hat and stick I went out into the cool summer night. As I closed the door of the compartment I saw my fellow traveller fluttering round the lamp. . . .



ON A FAMOUS SERMON

I SEE that Queen Alexandra has made a further distribution among charities of the profits from the sale of the late Canon Fleming's sermon, "On Recognition in Eternity." The sermon was preached on the occasion of the death of the Duke of Clarence, and judging from its popularity I have no doubt it is a good sermon. But I am tempted to write on the subject by a mischievous thought suggested by the authorship of this famous sermon. There is no idea which makes so universal an appeal to the deepest instincts of humanity as the idea that when we awake from the dream of life we shall pass into the companionship of those who have shared and lightened our pilgrimage here. The intellect may dismiss the idea as unscientific, but, as Newman says, the finite can tell us nothing about the infinite Creator, and the Quaker poet's serene assurance—

Yet love will hope and faith will trust
(Since He Who knows our needs is just)
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must—

defies all the buffetings of reason.

Even Shelley, for all his aggressive Atheism, could not, as Francis Thompson points out, escape the instinct of personal immortality. In his glorious elegy on Keats he implicitly assumes the personal immortality which the poem explicitly denies, as when, to greet the dead youth,

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought
Far in the unapparent.

And it is on the same note that the poem reaches its sublime and prophetic close:—

I am borne darkly, fearfully afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of heaven,
The soul of Adonais like a star
Beacons from the abode where the eternal are.

The ink of that immortal strain was hardly dry upon the page when the vision was fulfilled, for only a few months elapsed between the death of Keats and the drowning of Shelley, and in the interval the great monody had been written.

I refuse, for the sake of the feelings of Mr. J.

M. Robertson and Mr. Foote and the other stern old dogmatists of Rationalism, to deny myself the pleasure of imagining the meeting of Shelley and Keats in the Elysian Fields. If Shelley, "borne darkly, fearfully afar" beyond the confines of reason, could feel that grand assurance why should I, who dislike the dogmatists of Rationalism as much as the dogmatists of Orthodoxy, deny myself that beautiful solace? I like to think of those passionate spirits in eternal comradeship, pausing in their eager talk to salute deep-browed Homer as, perchance, he passes in grave discourse with the "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies." I like to think of Dante meeting Beatrice by some crystal stream, of Lincoln wandering side by side with Lee, of poor Mary Lamb reunited to the mother she loved and whom she slew in one of her fits of insanity, and of an innumerable host of humbler recognitions no less sweet.

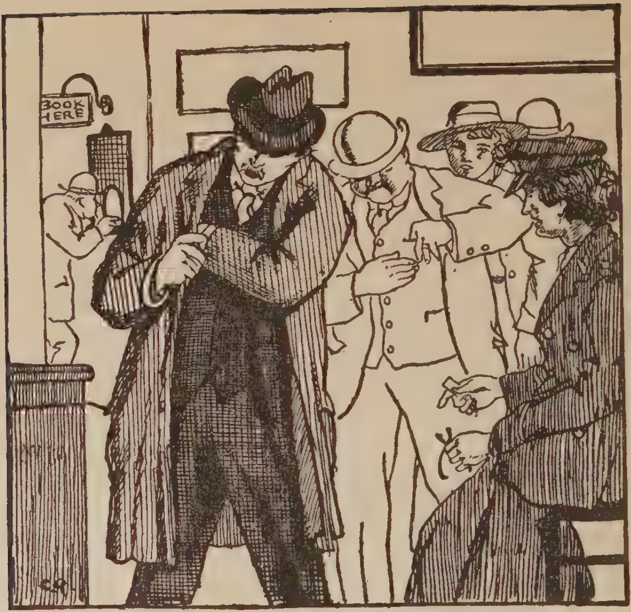
But Canon Fleming's name reminds me that all the recognitions will not be agreeable. I cannot imagine that eminent Court preacher showing any eagerness to recognise or be recognised by that other eminent preacher, Dr. Talmage. For it was Talmage's sermon on the wickedness of great cities that Fleming so unblushingly preached *and published* as his own, simply altering the names of American cities to those of European cities. Some cruel editor printed the two sermons side by side, I think in the old *St. James's Gazette,* and the poor Canon's excuse only made matters rather worse. The incident did not prevent him securing preferment, and his sermon on "Recognition in Eternity" still goes on selling. But he will not be comfortable when he sees Talmage coming his way across the Elysian Fields. I do not think he will offer him the very unconvincing explanation he offered to the British public. He will make a frank confession and Talmage will no doubt give him absolution. There will be many such awkward meetings. With what emotions of shame, for example, will Charles I. see Strafford approaching. "Not a hair of your head shall be touched by Parliament" was his promise to that instrument of his despotic rule, but when Parliament demanded the head itself he endorsed the verdict that sent Strafford to the scaffold. And I can imagine there will be a little coldness between Cromwell and Charles when they pass, though in the larger understanding of that world Charles, I fancy, will see that he was quite impossible, and that he left the grim old Puritan no other way.

It is this thought of the larger understanding that will come when we have put off the coarse vesture of things that makes this speculation reasonable. That admirable woman, Mrs. Berry, in "Richard Feverel," had the recognitions of eternity in her mind when she declared that widows ought not to remarry. "And to think," she said, "o' two (husbands) claimin' o' me then, it makes me hot all over." Mrs. Berry's mistake was in thinking of Elysium in the terms of earth. It is precisely because we shall have escaped from the encumbering flesh and all the bewilderments of this clumsy world that we cannot merely tolerate the idea, but can find in it a promised explanation of the inexplicable.

It is the same mistake that I find in Mr. Belloc, who, I see from yesterday's paper, has been denouncing the "tomfoolery" of spiritualism, and describing the miracles of Lourdes as "a special providential act designed to convert, change, upset, and disintegrate the materialism of the nineteenth century." I want to see the materialism of the nineteenth century converted, changed, upset and disintegrated, as much as Mr. Belloc does, but I have as little regard for the instrument he trusts in as for the "tomfoolery" of spiritualism. And when he goes on to denounce a Miss Posthlethwaite, a Catholic spiritualist, for having declared that in the next world she found people of all religions and did not find that Mohammedans suffered more than others I feel that he is as materialistic as Mrs. Berry. He sees heaven in the terms of the troublesome little sectarianisms of the earth, with an ascendency party in possession, and no non-alcoholic Puritans, Jews, or Mohammedans visible to his august eye. They will all be in another place, and very uncomfortable indeed. He really has not advanced beyond that infantile partisanship satirised, I think, by Swift:—

We are God's chosen few,
All others will be damned.
There is no place in heaven for you;
We can't have heaven crammed.

No, no, Mr. Belloc. The judgments of eternity will not be so vulgar as this, nor the companionship so painfully exclusive. You will not walk the infinite meadows of heaven alone with the sect you adorned on earth. You will find all sorts of people there regardless of the quaint little creeds they professed in the elementary school of life. I am sure you will find Mrs. Berry there, for that simple woman had the root of the true gospel in her. "I think it's al'ays the plan in a dielemma," she said "to pray God and walk forward." I think it is possible that in the larger atmosphere you will discover that she was a wiser pupil in the elementary school than you were.



ON POCKETS AND THINGS

I SUPPOSE most men felt, as I felt, the reasonableness of Mr. Justice Bray's remarks the other day on the preference of women for bags instead of pockets. A case was before him in which a woman had gone into a shop, had put down her satchel containing her money and valuables, turned to pick it up a little later, found it had been stolen, and thereupon brought an action against the owners of the shop for the recovery of her losses. The jury were unsympathetic, found that in the circumstances the woman was responsible, and gave a verdict against her.

Of course the jury were men, all of them prejudiced on this subject of pockets. At a guess I should say that there were not fewer than 150 pockets in that jury-box, *and not one satchel.* You, madam, may retort that this is only another instance of the scandal of this man-ridden world. Why were there no women in that jury-box? Why are all the decisions of the courts, from the High Court to the coroner's court, left to the judgment of men? Madam, I share your indignation. I would "comb-out" the jury-box. I would send half the jurymen, if not into the trenches, at least to hoe turnips, and fill their places with a row of women. Women are just as capable as men of forming an opinion about facts, they have at least as much time to spare, and their point of view is as essential to justice. What can there be more ridiculous, for example, than a jury of men sitting for a whole day to decide the question of the cut of a gown without a single woman's expert opinion to guide them, or more unjust than to leave an issue between a man and a woman entirely in the hands of men? Yes, certainly, madam, I am with you on the general question.

But when we come to the subject of pockets, I am bound to confess that I am with the jury. If I had been on that jury I should have voted with fervour for making the woman responsible for her own loss. If it were possible for women to put their satchels down on counters, or the seats of buses, or any odd place they thought of, and then to make some innocent person responsible because they were stolen, there would be no security for anybody. It would be a travesty of justice—a premium upon recklessness and even fraud. Moreover, people who won't wear pockets deserve to be punished. They ask for trouble and ought not to complain when they get it.

I have never been able to fathom the obduracy of women in this matter of pockets. It is not the only reflection upon their common-sense which is implicit in their dress. If we were to pass judgment on the relative intelligence of the sexes by their codes of costume, sanity would pronounce overwhelmingly in favour of men. Imagine a man who buttoned his coat and waistcoat down the back, so that he was dependent on someone else to help him to help to dress him in the morning and unfasten him at night, or who relied on such abominations as hooks-and-eyes scattered over unattainable places, in order to keep his garments in position. You cannot imagine such a man. Yet women submit to these incredible tyrannies of fashion without a murmur, and talk about them as though it was the hand of fate upon them. I have a good deal of sympathy with the view of a friend of mine who says that no woman ought to have the vote until she has won the enfranchisement of her own buttons.

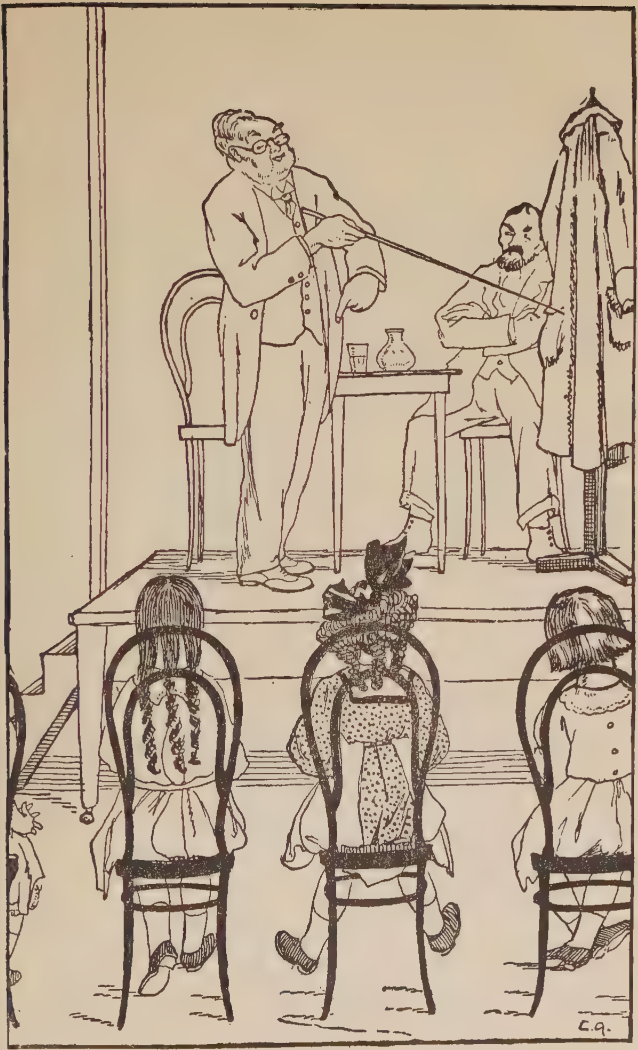
Or take high-heeled boots. Is there any sight more ludicrous than the spectacle of a woman stumbling along on a pair of high heels, flung out of the perpendicular and painfully struggling to preserve her equilibrium, condemned to take finnicking little steps lest she should topple over, all the grace and freedom of movement lost in an ugly acrobatic feat? And when the feet turn in, and the high heels turn over

—heavens! I confess I never see high heels without looking for a mindless face, and I rarely look in vain.

But the puzzle about the pockets is that quite sensible women go about in a pocketless condition. I turned to Mrs. Alpha just now—she was sitting by the fire knitting—and asked how many pockets she had when she was fully dressed. "None," she said. "Pockets haven't been worn for years and years, but now they are coming in—in an ornamental way." "In an ornamental way," said I. "Won't they carry anything?" "Well, you can trust a handkerchief to them." "Not a purse?" "Good gracious, no. It would simply ask to be stolen, and if it wasn't stolen in five minutes it would fall out in ten." The case was stranger than I had thought. Not to have pockets was bad enough; but to have sham pockets! Think of it! We have been at war for three and a half years, and women are now beginning to wear pockets "in an ornamental way," not for use but as a pretty fal-lal, much as they might put on another row of useless buttons to button nothing. And what is the result? Mrs. Alpha (I have full permission to mention her in order to give actuality to this moral discourse,) spends hours looking for her glasses, for her keys, for the letter that came this morning, for her purse, for her bag, for all that is hers. And we, the devoted members of her family, spend hours in looking for them too, exploring dark corners, probing the interstices of sofas and chairs, rummaging the dishevelled drawers anew, discovering the thing that disappeared so mysteriously last week or last month and that we no longer want, but rarely the article that is the very hub of the immediate wheel of things.

Now, I am different. I am pockets all over. I am simply agape with pockets. I am like a pillar-box walking about, waiting for the postman to come and collect things. All told, I carry sixteen pockets—none of them ornamental, every one as practical as a time-table—pockets for letters, for watch, for keys, for handkerchiefs, for tickets, for spectacles (two pairs, long and short distance), for loose money, for note-wallet, for diary and pocket-book—why, bless me, you can hardly mention a thing I haven't a pocket for. And I would not do without one of them, madam—not one. Do I ever lose things? Of course I lose things. I lose them in my pockets. You can't possibly have as many pockets as I have got without losing things in them. But then you have them all the time.

That is the splendid thing about losing your property in your own pockets. It always turns up in the end, and that lady's satchel left on the counter will never turn up. And think of the surprises you get when rummaging in your pockets—the letters you haven't answered, the bills you haven't paid, the odd money that has somehow got into the wrong pocket. When I have nothing else to do I just search my pockets—all my pockets, those in the brown suit, and the grey suit, and the serge suit, and my "Sunday best"—there must be fifty pockets in all, and every one of them full of something, of ghosts of engagements I haven't kept, and duties I haven't performed, and friends I have neglected, of pipes that I have mourned



Meeting of the S. P. P. A. W.

as lost, and half packets of cigarettes that by some miracle I have not smoked, and all the litter of a casual and disorderly life. I would not part with these secrecies for all the satchels in Oxford Street. I am my own book of mysteries. I bulge with mysteries. I can surprise myself at any moment I like by simply exploring my pockets. If I avoid exploring them I know I am not very well. I know I am not in a condition to face the things that I might find there. I just leave them there till I am stronger—not lost, madam, as they would be in your satchel, but just forgotten, comfortably forgotten. Why should one always be disturbing the sleeping dogs in the kennels of one's pockets? Why not let them sleep? Are there not enough troubles in life that one must go seeking them in one's own pockets? And I have a precedent, look you. Did not Napoleon say that if you did not look at your letters for a fortnight you generally found that they had answered themselves?

And may I not in this connection recall the practice of Sir Andrew Clarke, the physician of Mr. Gladstone, as recorded in the reminiscences of Mr. Henry Holiday? At dinner one night Sir Andrew was observed to be drinking champagne and was asked why he allowed himself an indulgence which he so rigorously denied to his patients. "Yes," he said, "but you do not understand my case. When I go from there I shall find a pile of fifty or sixty letters awaiting answers." "But will champagne help you to answer them?" asked the other. "Not at all," said Sir Andrew, "not at all; but it puts you in the frame of mind in which you don't care a damn whether they are answered or not." I do not offer this story for the imitation of youth but for the solace of people like myself who have long reached the years of discretion without becoming discreet and who like to feel that their weaknesses have been shared by the eminent and the wise.

And, to conclude, the wisdom of the pocket habit is not to be judged by its abuse, but by its obvious convenience and safety. I trust that some energetic woman will be moved to inaugurate a crusade for the redemption of her sex from its pocketless condition. A Society for the Propagation of Pockets Among Women (S.P.P.A.W.) is a real need of the time. It should be a part of the great work of after-the-war reconstruction. It should organise opinion, distribute leaflets and hold meetings, with the Mayor in the chair and experts, rich in pockets and the lore of the subject, to light the fire of rebellion throughout the land. Women have won the vote from the tyrant man. Let them win their pockets from the tyrant dressmaker.

ON A COUNTRY PLATFORM

THE fields lie cheek-by-jowl with the station, and a group of high elms, in which dwells a colony of rooks, throws its ample shadow over the "down" platform.

From the cornfield that marches side by side with the station there comes the cheerful music of the reaper and the sound of the voices of the harvesters, old men, some women and more children—for half of the field has been reaped and is being gathered and gleaned. They are so near that the engine-driver of the "local" train exchanges gossip with them in the intervals of oiling his engine. They talk of the crops and the bad weather there has been and the change that has come with September, and the news of boys who are fighting or have fallen. . . .

A dozen youths march, two by two, on to the "up" platform. They are in civilian dress, but behind them walks a sergeant who ejaculates "left—left—left" like the flick of a whip. They are the latest trickle from this countryside to the great whirlpool, most of them mere boys. They have the self-consciousness of obscure country youths who have suddenly been thrust into the public eye and are aware that all glances are turned critically upon their awkward movements. They shamble along with a grotesque caricature of a dare-devil swagger, and laugh loud and vacantly to show how much they are at ease with themselves and the world. It is hollow gaiety and suggests the animation of a trout with a hook in its throat.

The booking-clerk, lounging at the door of the booking-office, passes a half-contemptuous remark upon them to a companion.

"Wait till they come for you, Jimmy," says the other. "You won't find it so funny then."

Jimmy's face falls at the reminder, for he is nearly ripe for the great harvest, and the reaper will soon come his way. . . .

A few people drift in from outside as the time for the departure of the London train approaches. Among them, a young woman, hot and flushed and carrying a country basket, is greeted by an acquaintance with surprise.

"What *are* you doing here?"

"I'm going to London—just as I am—a telegram from Tom—he's got leave—isn't it glorious—and all so unexpected—couldn't change, or even drop my basket—the messenger met me in the street—hadn't a moment to lose to catch the train." . . .

A little group brushes by her with far other emotions. A stalwart soldier, a bronzed, good-looking fellow, with three stripes, who has evidently seen much service, is returning from leave. His wife, neatly dressed and with head down, wheels a perambulator beside him. Inside the perambulator is a child of three years or so. Two other children, of perhaps five and six, walk with the soldier, each clasping a hand. The little procession passes in silence to the end of the platform, full of that misery which seeks to be alone with itself. . . .

Over the wooden bridge that connects the two platforms comes a solitary soldier, laden with his belongings. He has come in from some other village by the local train. He flings himself down on the form and stares gloomily at the elms and the cornfield and the sunshine. A comfortable-looking, elderly man, who has a copy of the *London Corn Circular* in his hand, turns to him with that amiable desire to be friendly which elderly people have in the presence of soldiers.

"And how long have you been out at the war, sonny?" he asks, much as he might ask how long holiday he had had.

"I'm sick of the bloody war," says the soldier, without even turning his head.

The comfortable, elderly man collapses into silence and the *Corn Circular*. . . .

A young officer who has been driven up in a dog-cart comes on the platform accompanied by a dog with tongue lolling from its mouth and with the large, brown, affectionate eyes of the Airedale.

The train thunders in, and the officer opens a carriage door. The dog tries to enter with his master.

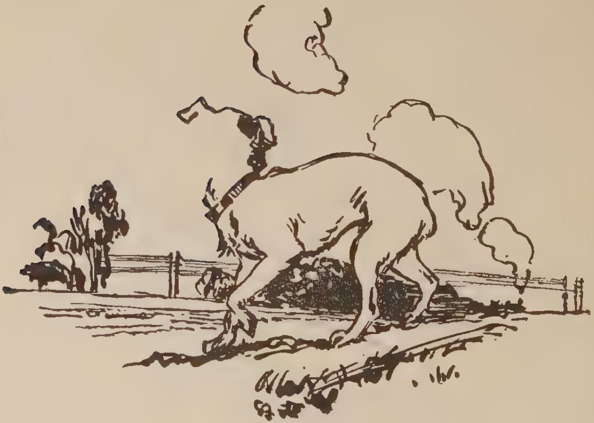
"No, no, old chap," says the latter, gently patting him and pulling him back. "Go home. They don't want you where I'm going."

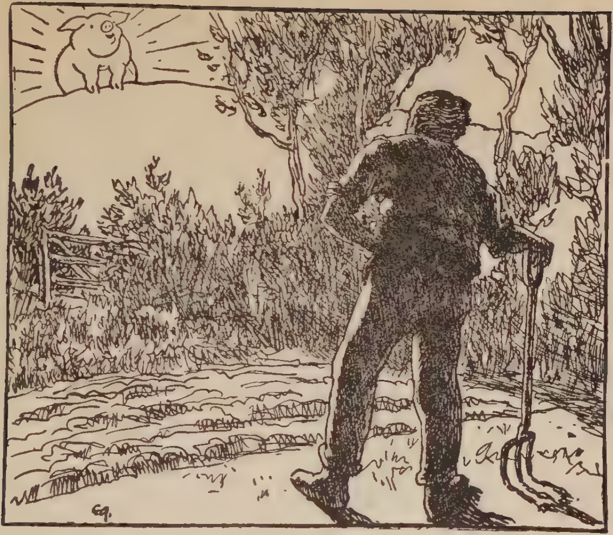
The dog stands for a moment on the platform, panting and gazing at his master as if hoping that he will relent. Then he turns and trots away, throwing occasional glances back on the off-chance of a whistle of recall. . . .

The moment has come for the separation of the little family at the end of the platform. The soldier leans from the carriage window and his wife clings about his neck. The two children stand by the perambulator. They are brave little girls and remember that they have not to cry. The train begins to move and the woman unclasps herself, leaving her husband at the window, smiling his hardest and throwing kisses to the children. The train gathers speed and takes a curve and the soldier has vanished. The mother turns to the perambulator and seeks to hide her face as she hurries with her little charges along the platform and through the gate. The two little girls stifle their sobs in their aprons, but the child in the carriage knows nothing of public behaviour. He knows in that dim way that is the affliction of childhood that something terrible is happening, and as the forlorn little group hurries by to escape into the lane hard by where grief can have its fill he rends the air with his sobs and cries of "Poor dada, poor dada!"

Poor little mite, he is beginning his apprenticeship to this rough, insane world betimes. . . .

And now the platform is empty, and the only sound of life is the whirr of the reaping machine and the voices from the harvest field. Through the meadow that leads to the village the dog is slowly trotting home, still casting occasional glances backwards on the chance. . . .





ON A DISTANT VIEW OF A PIG

Yes, I would certainly keep a pig. The idea came to me while I was digging. I find that there is no occupation that stimulates thought more than digging if you choose your soil well. Digging in the London clay does not stimulate thought; it deadens thought. It is good exercise for the body, but it is no exercise for the mind. You can't play with your fancies as you plunge your spade into this stiff and stubborn medium. But in the light, porous soil of my garden on the chalk hills digging goes with a swing and a rhythm that set the thoughts singing like the birds. I feel I could win battles when I'm digging, or write plays or lyrics that would stun the world, or make speeches that would stir a post to action. Ideas seem as plentiful as blackberries in autumn, and if only I could put down the spade and capture them red-hot I feel that I could make *The Star* simply blaze with glory.

It was in one of these prolific moments that I thought of the pig. Like all great ideas there was something inevitable about it. The calculations of Le Verrier and Adams proved the existence of Neptune before that orb was discovered. They knew it was there before they found it. My pig was born without my knowledge. In the furnace of my mind he took shape merely by the friction of facts. He was a sort of pig by divine right. It was like this. In the midst of my digging Jim Squire, passing up the lane, had paused on the other side of the hedge to discuss last night's frost. I straightened my back for a talk, and naturally we talked about potatoes. If you want to get the best out of Jim Squire you must touch him on potatoes. There are some people who find Jim an unresponsive and suspicious yokel. That is because they do not know how to draw him out. Mention potatoes, or carrots, or the best way of dealing with slugs, or the right manure for a hot-bed, or any sensible subject like these, and he simply flows with wisdom and urbanity.

He observed that I should have a tidy few potatoes, what with the garden I was digging, *and* the piece I'd turned over in the orchard, *and* that there bit o' waste land on the hillside which he *had* heard as I was getting Mestur Wistock to plough up for me. Yes, there'd be a niceish lot. And he *did* hear I was going to set King Edwards and Arran Chiefs. Rare and fine potatoes they were too. He had some King Edwards last year—turned out wonderful, they did. One root he pulled up weighed 12 lb. Yes, Miss Mary weighed 'em for him in the scale at the farm—just for a hobby like as you might say. It was like this. He'd seen a bit in the paper about a man as had 8 lb. on a root, and he (Jim) said to himself, "This root beats that by a long chalk *I* know." And Miss Mary come by and she said she'd weigh 'em. And she did. And it was 12 lb. full, she said. If anything, she said, 'twas a shade over. *She* said as they'd have took a prize anywhere—that's what *she* said. . . . Well, you couldn't have too many potatoes these days. Wonderful good food they were, for man *and* pig. . . .

As he went on up the lane my spade took up that word like a refrain. At every rhythmic stroke it seemed to cry "pig" with increasing vehemence.

> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken.

A pig? Why not?—and I straightened my back again. I felt that something prodigious was taking shape. My eye wandered across the orchard. There were the hives standing in a row—three of them, to be increased to twelve as fast as the expert, who has set up her carpenter's shop in the barn, can get the parts to put together. And beyond the hives three sheds—one for poultry, one for the hotbed for mushrooms, the third—why, the very thing . . . Concrete the floor and it would be a very palace for a pig.

I took a turn up the garden to look this thing squarely in the face, and at the gate I saw the farmer's wife coming down the lane. We stopped, and she talked about her cows and about an order she had got from the Government to plough up more pasture, and then—as if echoing the very thought that was drumming in my head—about the litter of pigs she was expecting and of her wish to get the cottagers to keep pigs. Why, this was a very conspiracy of circumstance, thought I. It seemed as though man and events alike were engaged in a plot to make me keep a pig.

With an air of idle curiosity I encouraged the farmer's wife to talk on the thrilling theme, and she responded with enthusiasm. The pig, I found, was a grossly maligned animal. It had lain uncomplainingly under imputations that were foul slanders on its innocent and lovable character. Yes, lovable. She had had pigs who were as affectionate as any dog—pigs that followed her about in sheer friendliness. And as for the charge of filthiness, who was to blame? We gave them dirty styes and then called them dirty pigs. But the pig was a clean animal, loved cleanliness, thrived on cleanliness. It was man the dirty who kept the pig foul and then called him unclean. And what a profitable animal. She had had a sow which in four and a half years had produced 108 pigs and 102 of them came to maturity. What an example to

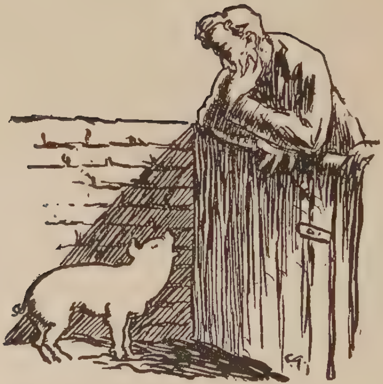
Shoreditch, I said. Perhaps they don't give them clean styes in Shoreditch, she said. No, I replied, they give them dirty styes. . . .

I went indoors, suffused with the vision of the transfigured pig, the affectionate, cleanly, intelligent pig, and took up a paper, and the first thing my eye encountered was an article on "The Cottager's Pig." I read it with the frenzy of a new religion and rose filled to the brim with lore about the animal to whose existence (except in the shape of bacon) I had been indifferent so long. And now, fully seized with the idea, it seemed that the world talked of nothing but pig. It was only that my ears were unstopped and my eyes unsealed by an awakened curiosity; but it seemed to me that the pig had suddenly been born into the universe, and that the air was filled with the rumour of his coming. I encountered the subject at every turn. In the *Times* I read a touching lament over the disappearance of the little black pig. Elsewhere I saw a facsimile letter from Lord Rhondda, in which he declared his loyalty to the pig and denied that he had ever spoken evil of him.

It was a patriotic duty to keep a pig. He was an ally in the war. I saw the whole German General Staff turning pale at his name, as Mazarin was said to turn pale at the name of Cromwell. Arriving in town I met that eminent politician Mr. R—— and he began to tell me how he had started all his cottagers in the North growing pig. By nightfall I could have held my own without shame or discredit in any company of pig dealers, and in my dreams I saw the great globe itself resting on the back, not of an elephant, but of a pig with a beautiful curly tail.

. . . .

Later: I have ordered the pig.



IN DEFENCE OF IGNORANCE

A YOUNG man wrote to me the other day lamenting his ignorance and requesting me to tell him what books to read and what to do in order to become learned and wise. I sent him a civil answer and such advice as occurred to me. But I confess that the more I thought of the matter the less assured I felt of my competence for the task. I ceased to be flattered by the implied tribute to my omniscience, and felt rather like a person who gives up a third-class ticket after he has ridden in a first-class carriage might feel. I surveyed my title to this reputation for learning, and was shocked at the poverty of my estate. As I contrasted the mountain of things I didn't know with the molehill of things I did know, my self-esteem shrank to zero. Why, my dear young sir, thought I, I cannot pay twopence in the pound. I am nothing but the possessor of a widespread ignorance. Why should you come to me for a loan?

I begin with myself—this body of me that is carried about on a pair of cunningly devised stilts and waves a couple of branches with five flexible twigs at the end of each, and is surmounted by a large round knob with wonderful little orifices, and glittering jewels, and a sort of mat for a covering, and which utters strange noises and speaks and sings and laughs and cries. Bless me, said I, what do I know about it? I am a mere bundle of mysteries in coat and breeches. I couldn't tell you where my epiglottis is or what it does without looking in a dictionary. I have been told, but I always forget. I am little better than the boy in the class. "Where is the diaphragm?" asked the teacher. "Please, sir, in North Staffordshire," said the boy. I may laugh at the boy, but any young medical student would laugh just as much at me if I told him honestly what I do not know about the diaphragm. And when it comes to the ultimate mysteries of this aggregation of atoms which we call the human body the medical student and, indeed, the whole Medical Faculty would be found to be nearly as ignorant as the boy was about the diaphragm.

From myself I pass to all the phenomena of life, and wherever I turn I find myself exploring what Carlyle calls the "great, deep sea of Nescience on which we float like exhalations that are and then are not." I see Orion striding across the southern heavens, and feel the wonder and the majesty of that stupendous spectacle, but if I ask myself what I know about it I have no answer. And even the knowledge of the most learned astronomer only touches the fringe of the immensity. What is beyond—beyond—beyond? His mind is balked, as mine is, almost at the threshold of the mighty paradox of a universe which we can conceive neither as finite nor as infinite, which is unthinkable as having limits and unthinkable as having no limits. As the flowers come on in summer I always learn their names, but I know that I shall have to learn them again next year. And as to the mystery of their being, by what miracle they grow and transmute the secretions of the earth and air into life and beauty—why, my dear young sir, I am no more communicative than the needy knife-grinder. "Story? God bless you, I have none to tell, sir."

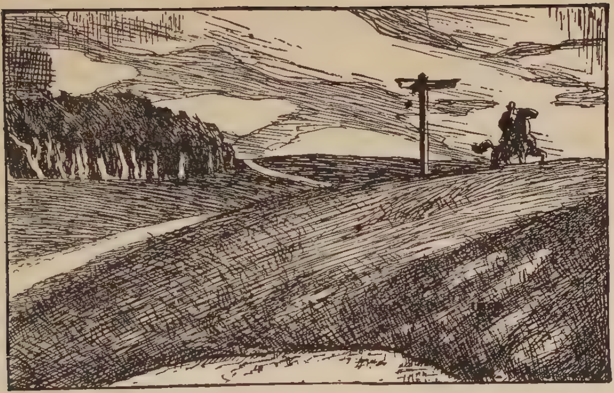
I cannot put my hand to anything outside my little routine without finding myself meddling with things I don't understand. I was digging in the garden just now and came upon a patch of ground with roots deep down. Some villainous pest, said I, some enemy of my carrots and potatoes. Have at them! I felt like a knight charging to the rescue of innocence. I plunged the fork deeper and deeper and tore at the roots, and grew breathless and perspiring. Even now I ache with the agonies of that titanic combat. And the more I fought the more infinite became the ramifications of those roots. And so I called for the expert advice of the young person who was giving some candy to her bees in the orchard. She came, took a glance into the depths, and said: "Yes, you are pulling up that tree." And she pointed to an ivy-grown tree in the hedge a dozen yards away. Did I feel foolish, young sir? Of course I felt foolish, but not more foolish than I have felt on a thousand other occasions. And you ask me for advice.

I recall one among many of these occasions for my chastening. When I was young I was being driven one day through a woodland country by an old fellow who kept an inn and let out a pony and chaise for hire. As we went along I made some remark about a tree by the wayside and he spoke of it as a poplar. "Not a poplar," said I with the easy assurance of youth, and I described to him for his information the characters of what I conceived to be the poplar. "Ah," he said, "you are thinking of the Lombardy poplar. That tree is the Egyptian poplar." And then he went on to tell me of a score of other poplars—their appearance, their habits, and their origins—quite kindly and without any knowledge of the withering blight that had fallen upon my cocksure ignorance. I found that he had spent his life in tree culture and had been forester to a Scotch duke. And I had explained to him what a poplar was like! But I think he did me good, and I often recall him to mind when I feel disposed to give other people information that they possibly do not need.

And the books I haven't read, and the sciences I don't know, and the languages I don't speak, and the things I can't do—young man, if you knew all this you would be amazed. But it does not make me unhappy. On the contrary I find myself growing cheerful in the contemplation of these vast undeveloped estates. I feel like a fellow who has inherited a continent and, so far, has only had time to cultivate a tiny corner of the inheritance. The rest I just wander through like a boy in wonderland. Some day I will know about all these things. I will develop all these immensities. I will search out all these mysteries. In my heart I know I shall do nothing of the sort. I know that when the curtain rings down I shall be digging the same tiny plot. But it is pleasant to dream of future conquests that you won't make.

And, after all, aren't we all allotment holders of the mind, cultivating our own little patch and surrounded by the wonderland of the unknown? Even the most learned of us is ignorant when his knowledge is measured by the infinite sum of things. And the riches of knowledge themselves are much more widely diffused than we are apt to think. There are few people who are not better informed about something than we are, who have not gathered their own peculiar sheaf of wisdom or knowledge in this vast harvest field of experience. That is at once a comfortable and a humbling thought. It checks a too soaring vanity on the one hand and a too tragic abasement on the other. The fund of knowledge is a collective sum. No one has all the items, nor a fraction of the items, and there are few of us so poor as not to have some. If I were to walk out into the street now I fancy I should not meet a soul, man or woman, who could not fill in some blank of my mind. And I think—for I must not let humility go too far—I think I could fill some blank in theirs. Our carrying capacity varies infinitely, but we all carry something, and it differs from the store of any one else on earth. And, moreover, the mere knowledge of things is not necessary to their enjoyment, nor necessary even to wisdom. There are things that every ploughboy knows to-day which were hidden from Plato and Cæsar and Dante, but the ploughboy is not wiser than they. Sir Thomas Browne, in his book on Vulgar Errors, declared that the idea that the earth went round the sun was too foolish to be controverted. I know better, but that doesn't make me a wiser man than Browne. Wisdom does not depend on these things. I suppose that, on the whole, Lincoln was the wisest and most fundamentally sane man who ever took a great part in the affairs of this planet. Yet compared with the average undergraduate he was utterly unlearned.

Do not, my young friend, suppose I am decrying your eagerness to know. Learn all you can, my boy, about this wonderful caravan on which we make our annual tour round the sun, and on which we quarrel and fight with such crazy ferocity as we go. But at the end of all your learning you will be astonished at how little you know, and will rejoice that the pleasure of living is in healthy feeling rather than in the accumulation of facts. There was a good deal of truth in that saying of Savonarola that "a little old woman who kept the faith knew more than Plato or Aristotle."



ON A SHINY NIGHT

The pleasantest hour of my day is the hour about midnight. It is then that I leave the throbbing heart of Fleet Street behind me, jump on to the last bus bound for a distant suburb, and commandeer the back corner seat. If the back seat is not vacant I sit as near as I can and watch the enemy who possesses it with a vigilant eye. When he rises I pounce on the quarry like a kestrel on its prey. I love the back seat, not only because it is the most comfortable, but also because it gives you the sense of solitude in the midst of a crowd, which is one of the most enjoyable sensations I know. To see and not be seen, to watch the human comedy unobserved, save by the friendly stars who look down very searchingly but never blab, to have the advantages of both solitude and society in one breath, as it were—this is my idea of enjoyment.

But most of all I love the back seat on such a night as last night, when the crescent moon is sailing high in a cloudless sky and making all the earth a wonder of romance. The garish day is of the earth, "the huge and thoughtful night" when no moon is seen and the constellations blaze in unimaginable space is of the eternal; but here in this magic glamour of the moon where night and day are wedded is the realm of romance. You may wander all day in the beech woods and never catch a glimpse of Tristan and Iseult coming down the glades or hear an echo of Robin Hood's horn; but walk in the woods by moonlight and every shadow will have its mystery and will talk to you of the legends of long ago.

That was why Sir Walter Scott had such a passion for "Cumnor Hall." "After the labours of the day were over," said Irving, "we often walked in the meadows, especially in the moonlight nights; and he seemed never weary of repeating the first stanza:—

The dews of summer night did fall—
  The moon, sweet regent of the sky,
Silvered the walls of Cumnor Hall,
  And many an oak that stood thereby."

There you have the key to all the world of Sir Walter. He was the King of the Moonlighters. He was a man who would have been my most dreaded rival on the midnight bus. He would have wanted the back seat, I know, and there he would have sat and chanted "Cumnor Hall" to himself and watched the moonlight touching the suburban streets to poetry and turning every suburban garden into a twilight mystery.

. . . .

There are, of course, quite prosaic and even wicked people who love "a shiny night." There is, for example, the gentleman from "famous Lincolnshire" whose refrain is:—

Oh, 'tis my delight
On a shiny night,
In the season of the year.

I love his song because it is about the moonlight, and I am not sure that I am much outraged by the fact that he liked the shiny night because he was a poacher. I never could affect any indignation about poachers. I suspect that I rather like them. Anyhow, there is no stanza of that jolly song which I sing with more heartiness than:—

Success to every gentleman that lives in Lincolnshire,
Success to every poacher that wants to sell a hare.
Bad luck to every gamekeeper that will not sell his deer.
Oh, 'tis my delight, etc.

And there was Dick Turpin. He, too, loved the moonlight for very practical reasons. He loved it not because it silvered the oak, but because of that deep shadow of the oak in which he could stand with Black Bess and await the coming of his victim.

And it is that shadow which is the real secret of the magic of moonlight. The shadows of the day have beauty but no secrecy. The sunlight is too strong to be wholly or even very materially denied. Even its shadows are luminous and full of colour, and the contrast between light and shade is not the contrast between the visible and the invisible, between the light and the dark: it is only a contrast between degrees of brightness. Everything is bright, but some things are more bright than others. But in the moonlight the world is etched in black and white. The shadows are flat and unrevealing. They have none of the colour values produced by the reflected lights in the shadows of the day. They are as secret as the grave; distinct personalities, sharply figured against the encompassing light, not mere passages of colour tuned to a lower key. And the quality of the encompassing light itself emphasises the contrast. The moon does not bring out the colour of things, but touches them with a glacial pallor—

. . . . Strange she is, and secret.
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

See the moonlight fall upon your house-front and mark the wonderful effect of black and white that it creates. Under the play of the moonbeams it becomes a house of mysteries. The lights seem lighter than by day, but that is only because the darks are so much darker. That shadow cast by the gable makes a blackness in which anything may lurk, and it is the secrecy of the shadow in a world of light that is the soul of romance.

Take a walk in the woods in the bright moonlight over tracks that you think you could follow blindfold, and you will marvel at the tricks which those black shadows of the trees can play with the most familiar scenes. Keats, who was as much of a moonlighter in spirit as Scott, knew those impenetrable shadows well:—

. . . . tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
  But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

In this moonlight world you may skip at will from the known to the unknown, have publicity on one side of the way and secrecy on the other, walk in the light to see Jessica's face, and in the shadow to escape the prying eyes of Shylock. Hence through all time it has been the elysium of lovers, and "Astarte, queen of heaven, with crescent horns," has been the goddess whom they serve,

To whose bright image nightly by the moon,
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs.

Perhaps it is the eternal lover in us that responds so unfailingly to the magic of the moonlight.

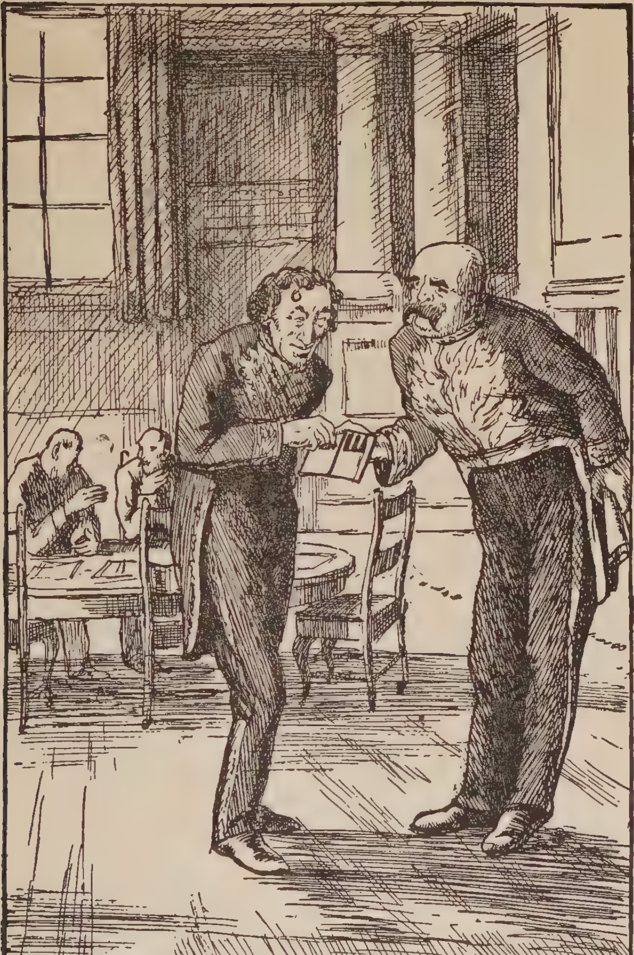
ON GIVING UP TOBACCO

THIS evening I am morally a little unapproachable I feel too good to be true. Perhaps it would be possible for me to endure the company of Mr. Pecksniff; but that good man is dead, and I am lonely in a world that is not quite up to my moral handicap. For I have given up tobacco. For a whole day not a wreath of smoke has issued from my lips, not a pipe, or a cigar, or a cigarette has had the victory over me. . . . For a whole day! I had not realised how long a day could be. It is as though I have ceased to live in time and have gone into eternity. I once heard a man say: "Dear me! How time flies!" It struck me at the moment as a true and penetrating remark, and I have often repeated it since. But now I know it to be false. I know that that man must have been a slave to tobacco, that subtle narcotic that gives the illusion of the flight of time. If he had the moral courage to follow my example, he would not say "How times flies!" He would say, as I do (with tears in his voice, and with a glance at his pipe on the mantelpiece), "How time stands still!" He would find that a day can seem as long as a year; that he can lengthen his life until he is terrified at the prospect of its endlessness.

I have been contemplating this thing for years. Some day, I have said to myself, I will have a real trial of strength with this Giant Nicotine who has held me thrall to his service. Long have I borne his yoke—ever since that far-off day when I burned a hole in my jacket pocket with a lighted cigar that I hid at the approach of danger. (How well I remember that day: the hot sunshine, the walk in the fields, the sense of forbidden joys, the tragedy of the burnt hole, the miserable feeling of physical nausea.) I have kicked against the tyranny of a habit that I knew had become my master. It was not the tobacco I disliked. Far from it. I liked the tobacco; but disliked the habit of tobacco. The tendency of most of us is to become creatures of habit and to lose our freedom—to cease to be masters of our own actions. "Take away his habits, and there is nothing of him left," says a character in some play, and the saying has a wide application. I did not possess a pipe: it was the pipe that possessed me. I did not say with easy, masterful assurance, "Come, I have had a hard day (or a good dinner); I will indulge myself with a pipe of tobacco." It was the pipe which said, "Come, slave, to your devotions." And though as the result of one of my spiritual conflicts I threw away my pipe and resolved to break the fall with an occasional cigarette, I found it was only the old tyrannous habit in a new disguise. The old dog in a new coat, as Johnson used to say.

There are some people who approach this question frivolously. The young man called John in the "Breakfast Table" is an example. When the lady in bombazine denounced tobacco and said it ought all to be burned, the young man John agreed. Someone had given him a box of cigars, he said, and he was going to burn them all. The lady in bombazine rejoiced. Let him make a bonfire of them in the backyard, she said. "That ain't my way," replied the young man called John. "I burn 'em one at a time—little end in my mouth, big end outside." Similarly wanting in seriousness was the defence of tobacco set up by the wit who declared that it prolonged life. "Look at the ancient Egyptians," he said. "None of them smoked, *and they are all dead*." Others again discover virtues to conceal the tyranny. Lord Clarendon, when he was Foreign Minister, excused the fact that his room always reeked with tobacco smoke on the ground that it was necessary to his work. "The art of diplomacy," he said, "is the judicious administration of tobacco." No one knew better how to handle a cigar case than Bismarck, and it is no very extravagant fancy to see in the events of to-day the enormous fruit of an interlude of tobacco between him and Disraeli in the council chamber at Berlin.

There are some who say they smoke because it soothes their nerves, and others who say they smoke



"The art of diplomacy. . . ."

because it is an aid to social intercourse. It is true that you can sit and smoke and say nothing without feeling that the spirit of communion is broken. That was the case of Carlyle and his mother and of Carlyle and Tennyson, brave smokers all and silent to boot. They let their pipes carry on a conversation too deep for words. And lesser people, as Cowper knew, conceal their bankruptcy of words in wreaths of smoke:—

> The pipe, with solemn, interposing puff,
> Makes half a sentence at a time enough;
> The dozing sages drop the drowsy strain,
> Then pause, and puff, and speak, and puff again.

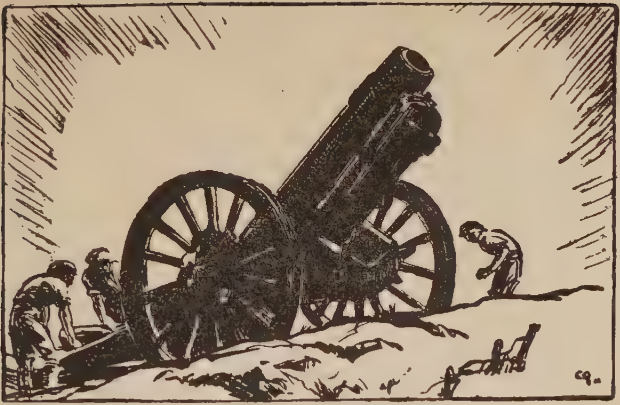
And, while some say they smoke for company, others claim to smoke for thought and inspiration. "Tobacco is the sister of Literature," says Sir Walter Raleigh, loyal in this to his great namesake who brought the good gift to our shores. Heaven forbid that I should deny the debt we who write owe to tobacco, but I am bound to confess that brother Literature did some handsome things before he found his sister. Homer and Euripides, Virgil and Horace wrote quite tolerably without the help of tobacco, though no one can read Horace without feeling that he had the true spirit of the tobacco cult. Had he been born a couple of thousand years later what praises of the weed of Havana he would have mingled with his praises of Falernian.

But if we are honest with ourselves we shall admit that we smoke not for this or that respectable reason

—not always even because we enjoy it—but because we have got into the habit and can't get out of it. And in this, as in other cases, it is the surrender of the will more than the thing yielded to that is the mischief. All the great systems of religion have provided against the enslavement of the individual to his habits. The ordinances of abstinence are designed, in part at all events, to keep the will master of the appetites. They are intended—altogether apart from the question of salvation by works—to serve as a breach with habits which, if allowed uninterrupted sway, reduce the soul to a sort of bondage to the body.

It is against that bondage of habit that I have warred to-day. I shall not describe the incidents of the struggle: the allurements of the tobacconists' shops—and what a lot of tobacconists' shops there are!—the insidious temptation of a company of men smoking contentedly after lunch, the heroism of waving away the offered cigarette or cigar as though it were a matter of no importance, the constant act of refusal. For this is no case of one splendid deed of heroism. You do not slay Apollyon with a thrust of your sword and march triumphantly on your way. You have to go on fighting every inch of the journey, deaf to the appeals of Gold Flake and Capstan and Navy Cut and the other syrens that beckon you from the shop windows. And now evening has come and the victory is mine. I have singed the beard of the giant. I am no longer his thrall. To-morrow I shall be able to smoke with a clear conscience—with the feeling that it is an act of my own free choice, and not an act of a slavish obedience to an old habit. . . .

How I shall enjoy to-morrow!



THE GREAT GOD GUN

A FEW days ago I saw the Advent of the Great God Gun. The goddess Aphrodite, according to ancient mythology, rose out of the foam of the sea, and the Great God Gun, too, emerged from a bath, but it was a bath of fire—fire so white and intense that the eyes were blinded by it as they are blinded by the light of the unclouded sun at mid-day.

Our presence had been timed for the moment of his coming. We stood in a great chamber higher than a cathedral nave, and with something even less than the dim religious light of a cathedral nave. The exterior of the temple was plain even to ugliness, a tower of high, windowless walls faced with corrugated iron. Within was a maze of immense mysteries, mighty cylinders towering into the gloom above, great pits descending into the gloom below, gigantic cranes showing against the dim skylight, with here and there a

Cyclopean figure clad in oily overalls and with a face grimy and perspiring.

The signal was given. Two shadowy figures that appeared in the darkness above one of the cylinders began their incantations. A giant crane towered above them and one saw its mighty claw descend into the orifice of the cylinder as if to drag some Eurydice out of the hell within. Then the word was spoken and somewhere a lever, or perhaps only an electric button, was touched. But at that touch the whole front of the mighty cylinder from top to bottom opened and swung back slowly and majestically, and one stood before a pillar of flame forty feet high, pure and white, an infinity of intolerable light, from whence a wave of heat came forth like a living thing. And as the door opened the Cyclops above—strange Dantesque figures now swallowed up in the gloom, now caught in the light of the furnace—set the crane in motion, and through the open door of the cylinder came the god, suspended from the claw of the crane that gripped it like the fingers of a hand.

It emerged slowly like a column of solid light—mystic, wonderful. All night it had stood imprisoned in the cylinder enveloped by that bath of incalculable hotness, and as it came out from the ordeal, it was as white as the furnace within. The great hand of the crane bore it forward with a solemn slowness until it paused over the mouth of one of the pits. I had looked into this pit and seen that it was filled nearly to the brim with a slimy liquid. It was a pit of oil—tens of thousands of gallons of highflash rape oil. It was the second bath of the god.

The monster, the whiteness of his heat now flushing to pink, paused above the pit. Then gravely, under the direction of the iron hand that held him suspended in mid-air, he began to descend into the oil. The breech end of the incandescent column touched the surface of the liquid, and at that touch there leapt out of the mouth of the pit great tongues of flame. As the red pillar sank deeper and deeper in the pit the flames burst up through the muzzle and licked with fury about the ruthless claw as if to tear it to pieces. But it would not let go. Lower and lower sank the god until even his head was submerged and he stood invisible beneath us, robed in his cloak of oil.

And there we will leave him to toughen and harden as he drinks in the oil hungrily through his burning pores. Soon he will be caught up in the claw of the crane again, lifted out of his bath and lowered into an empty pit near by. And upon him will descend another tube, that has passed through the same trials, and that will fit him as the skin fits the body. And then in due course he will be provided with yet another coat. Round and round him will be wound miles of flattened wire, put on at a tension of unthinkable resistance. And even then there remains his outer garment, his jacket, to swell still further his mighty bulk. After that he will be equipped with his brain—all the wonderful mechanism of breech and cradle—and then one day he will be carried to the huge structure near by, where the Great God Gun, in all his manifestations, from the little mountain ten-pounder to the leviathan fifteen-inch, rests shining and wonderful, to be sent forth with his message of death and destruction.

The savage, we are told, is misguided enough to "bow down to wood and stone." Poor savage! If we could only take him, with his childlike intelligence, into our temple to see the god that the genius and industry of civilised man has created, a god so vast that a hundred men could not lift him, of such incredible delicacy that his myriad parts are fitted together to the thousandth, the ten-thousandth, and even the hundred-thousandth of an inch, and out of whose throat there issue thunders and lightnings that carry ruin for tens of miles. How ashamed the poor savage would be of his idols of wood and stone! How he would abase himself before the god of the Christian nations!

And what a voracious deity he is! Here in the great arsenal of Woolwich one passes through miles and miles of bewildering activities, foundries where the forty-ton hammer falls with the softness of a caress upon the great column of molten metal, and gives it the first crude likeness of the god, where vast converters are sending out flames of an unearthly hue and brightness or where men clothed in grime and perspiration are swinging about billets of steel that scorch you as they pass from the furnace to the steam-press in which they are stamped like putty into the rough shape of great shells; shops where the roar of thousands of lathes drowns the voice and where the food of the god is passing through a multitude of preparations more delicate than any known to the kitchens of Lucullus; pools of silence where grave scientific men are at their calculations and their tests, and where mechanics who are the princes of their trade show you delicate instruments gauged to the hundred-thousandth of an inch that are so precious that they will scarcely let you handle them; mysterious chambers where the high explosives are handled and where the shells are filled, where you walk in felt slippers upon padded floors and dare not drop a pin lest you wake an earthquake, and where you see men working (for what pay I know not) with materials more terrible than lightnings, themselves partitioned off from eternity only by the scrupulous observance of the meticulous laws of this realm of the sleeping Furies.

A great town—a town whose activities alone are equal to all the labour of a city like Leeds—all devoted to the service of the god who lies there, mystic, wonderful, waiting to speak his oracles to men. I see the poor savage growing more and more ashamed of his wood and stone. And this, good savage, is only a trifling part of our devotions. All over the land wherever you go you shall find furnaces blazing to his glory, mountains shattered to make his ribs, factories throbbing day and night to feed his gigantic maw and to clothe his servants.

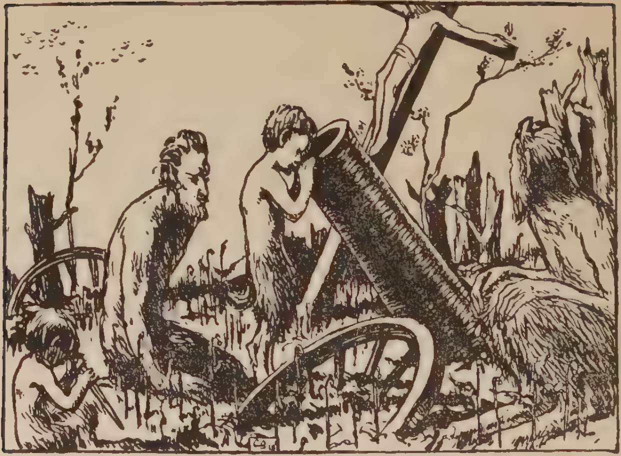
You shall go down to the great rivers and hear a thousand hammers beating their music out of the hulls of mighty ships that are to be the chariots of the god, in which he will go forth to preach his gospel. You shall go down into the bowels of the earth and see half-naked men toiling in the blackness by the dim light of the safety lamp to win that wonderful food which is the ultimate food of the god, power to forge his frame, power to drive his chariots, power to wing his bolts. You shall go to our temples of learning and the laboratories of our universities and see the miracles of destruction that science, the proudest achievement of man, can wring out of that astonishing mystery coal-tar. You shall go to our ports and watch the ships riding in proudly from the seas with their tributes from afar to the god. And behind all this activity you shall see a nation working day and night to pay for the food of the god, throwing all its accumulated wealth into the furnace to keep the engines going, pawning its future to the uttermost farthing and to the remotest generation.

And wherever the white man dwells, good savage, the same vision awaits you—

. . . . where Rhine unto the sea,
And Thames and Tiber, Seine and Danube run,
And where great armies glitter in the sun,
And great kings rule and men are boasted free.

Everywhere the hammers are ringing, the forests are falling, the harvests are being gathered, and men and women toil like galley slaves chained to the oar to build more and more of the image and feed him more lavishly with the food of death. You cannot escape the great traffic of the god though you go to the outposts of the earth. The horses of the pampas are being rounded up to drag his waggons, the sheep of Australia are being sheared to clothe his slaves, the pine trees of Lapland are being split for his service, the silence of the Arctic seas is broken by the throbbing of his chariots. As a neutral, good savage, you shall be free to go to Essen and see marvels no less wonderful than these you have seen at Woolwich, and all through Europe from Bremen to the Golden Horn the same infinite toil in the service of the Great God Gun will greet your astonished eyes.

Then, it may be, you will pass to where the god delivers his message; on sea where one word from his mouth sends a thousand men and twenty thousand tons of metal in one huge dust storm to the skies; on land where over hundreds of miles of battle front the towns and villages are mounds of rubbish, where the desolate earth is riven and shattered by that treacly stuff you saw being ladled into the shells in the danger rooms at Woolwich or Essen, where the dead lie thick as leaves in autumn, and where in every wood you will come upon the secret shrines of the god. At one light touch of the lever he lifts his head, coughs his mighty guttural speech and sinks back as if convulsed. He has spoken, the earth trembles, the trees about him shudder at the shock. And standing in the observatory you will see far off a great black, billowy mass rise in the clear sky and you will know that the god has blown another god like unto him into fragments,



and that in that mass that rises and falls is the wreckage of many a man who has looked his last upon the sun and will never till the home fields again or gladden the eyes of those he has left in some distant land.

And then, to complete your experience, you shall hear from the prophets of the Great God Gun the praises of his gospel, how that gospel is an abiding part of the white man's faith, how it acts as a moral medicine to humanity, purging it of its vices and teaching it the higher virtues (a visit to the music halls and the Strand at midnight will help your simple mind to realise this), and how the words of the poet, uttered in satire—

That civilisation doos git forrad
Sometimes upon a powder cart—

were in truth the words of eternal wisdom.

I see the poor savage returning sadly to his home and gazing with mingled scorn and humiliation at his futile image of wood and stone. Perhaps another feeling will mingle with his sadness. Perhaps he will be perplexed and puzzled. For he may have heard of another religion that the white man serves, and it may be difficult for his simple mind to reconcile that religion with the gospel of the Great God Gun.

ON A LEGEND OF THE WAR

I WAS going down to the country the other night when I fell into conversation with a soldier who was going home on leave. He was a reservist, who, after leaving the Army, had taken to gardening, and who had been called up at the beginning of the war. He had many interesting things to tell, which he told in that unromantic, matter-of-fact fashion peculiar to the British soldier. But something he said about his cousin led him to make a reference to Lord Kitchener, and I noticed that he spoke of the great soldier as if he were living.

"But," said I, "do you think Kitchener wasn't drowned?"

"Yes," he replied, "I can't never believe he was drowned."

"But why?"

"Well, he hadn't no escort. You're not going to make me believe he didn't know what he was doing when he went off and didn't have no escort. It stands to reason. He wasn't no stick of rhubub, as you might say. He was a hard man on the soldier, but he had foresight, he had. He could look ahead. That's what he could do. He could look ahead. What did he say about the war? Three years, he said, or the duration, and he was about right. He wasn't the man to get drowned by an oversight—not him. Stands to reason."

"Same with Hector Macdonald," he said, warming to his theme. "He's alive right enough. He's fighting for the Germans. Why, I know a man who seen him in a German uniform before the war began. I should know him if I see him. He inspected me often. He made a fool of himself at Monte Carlo and that sort o' thing, and just went off to get a new start, as you might say.

"And look at Hamel. He ain't dead—course not. He went to Germany—that's what he did. Stands to reason."

"And what has become of Kitchener?" I asked. "Is he fighting for the Germans too?"

Well, no. That was too tall an order even for his credulity. He boggled a bit at the hedge and then proceeded:

"He's laying by—that's what he's doing. He's laying by. You see, he'd done his job. He raised his army and made the whole job, as you may say, safe, and he wasn't going to take a back seat and be put in a corner. Not him. Stands to reason. Why should he? And him done all what he had done. So he just goes off and lays by until he's wanted again. Then he'll turn up all right. You'll see."

"But the ship was blown up," I said, "and only one boatload of survivors came to shore. There were 800 men who perished with Lord Kitchener. Not one has been heard of. Are they all 'laying by'? And where are they hiding? And why? And were they all in Lord Kitchener's secret?"

He seemed a little gravelled by these considerations, but unmoved.

"I can't never believe that he's dead," he said with the air of a man who didn't want to be awkward and would oblige if he possibly could. "I can't do it. . . . With his foresight and all. . . . And no escort, mind you. . . . No, I can't believe it. . . . Stands to reason."

And as he sank back in his seat and lit a cigarette I realised that the legend of Kitchener had passed beyond the challenge of death. I had heard much of that legend, much of mysterious letters from prisoners in Germany who had seen a very tall and formidable-looking man and hinted that that man's name was —well, whose would you think? Why, of course. . . . But here was the popular legend in all its naked simplicity and absoluteness.

It did not rest upon fact. It defied all facts and all evidence. It was an act of tyrannic faith. He was not dead, because the mind simply refused to believe that he was dead. And so he was alive. And there you are.

No doubt there was much in the circumstances of the great soldier's end that helped the growth of the myth. He filled so vast a place in the public mind and vanished so swiftly that his total disappearance seemed unthinkable. No living man had seen him die and no man had seen his body in death. He had just walked out into the night, and from the night he would return.

But, apart from the mystery of circumstance, the legend is a tribute to the strange fascination which this remarkable man exercised over the popular mind. It endowed him with qualities which were supernatural. In a world filled with the tragedy of mortality, here was a man who could daunt death itself. And when death stabbed him suddenly in the dark of that wild night off the Orkneys and flung his body to the wandering seas, the popular mind rejected the thought as a sort of blasphemy and insisted on his victory over the enemy. "Stands to reason." That's all. It just "stands to reason."

It seems a childish superstition, and yet if we could probe this belief to the bottom we might find that there is a truth beneath the apparent foolishness. It is that truth which Whitman, in his "Drum Taps," expresses over his fallen comrade—

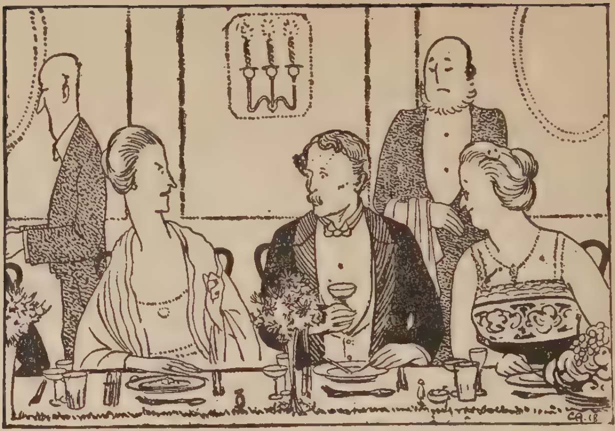
O the bullet could never kill what you really are, dear
  friend,
Nor the bayonet stab what you really are!

There is something in the heroic soul that defies death, and the simple mind only translates that faith in the deathlessness of the spirit into material terms. Drake lies in his hammock in Nombre Dios Bay, but he lies "listening for the drum and dreamin' arl the time of Plymouth Hoe."

Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Call him when your powder's running low—
"If the Dons sight Devon
I'll leave the port of Heaven,
And we'll drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago."

And so the legend of Drake's drum lives on, and long centuries after, in the midst of another and fiercer storm, men sail the seas and hear that ghostly inspiration to brave deeds and brave death. The torch of a great spirit never goes out. It is handed on from generation to generation and flames brightest when the night is darkest. And that I think is the truth that dwells at the back of my companion's obstinate credulity. Kitchener has become to him a symbol of something that cannot die and his non-metaphysical mind must have some material immortality to give his faith an anchorage. And so, out in the vague shadows of the borderland he sees the stalwart figure still at his post—"laying by," it is true, but watching and waiting and "listening for the drum" that shall summon him back to the field of action.

As the train slowed down at a country station and he prepared to go out into the night, he repeated in firm but friendly accents: "No, I can't never believe that he's dead. . . . Stands to reason." And as he bade me "Good-night," I said, "I think you are right. I think he is living, too." And as the door closed, I added to myself, "Stands to reason."



ON TALK AND TALKERS

The other day I went to dine at a house known for the brilliancy of the conversation. I confess that I found the experience a little trying. In conversation I am naturally rather a pedestrian person. The talk I like is the talk which Washington Irving had in mind when he said that "that is the best company in which the jokes are rather small and the laughter abundant." I do not want to be expected to be brilliant or to be dazzled by verbal pyrotechnics. I like to talk in my slippers as it were, with my legs at full stretch, my mind at ease, and with all the evening before me. Above all, I like the company of people who talk for enjoyment and not for admiration. "I am none of those who sing for meat, but for company," says Izaak Walton, and therein is the secret of good talk as well as of cheerful song.

But at this dinner table the conversation flashed around me like forked lightning. It was so staccato and elusive that it seemed like talking in shorthand. It was a very fencing match of wit and epigram, a sort of game of touch-and-go, or tip-and-run, or catch-as-catch-can, or battledore and shuttlecock, or demon patience, or anything you like that is intellectually and physically breathless and baffling. I thought of a bright thing to say now and then, but I was always so slow in getting away from the mark that I never got it out. It had grown stale and out of date before I could invest it with the artistic merit that would enable it to appear in such brilliant company. And so, mentally out of breath, I just sat and felt old-fashioned and slow, and tried to catch the drift of the sparkling dialogue. But I looked as wise as possible, just to give the impression that nothing was escaping me, and that the things I did not say were quite worth saying. That was Henry Irving's way when the conversation got beyond him. He just looked wise and said nothing.

There are few things more enviable than the quality of good talk, but this was not good talk. It was clever talk, which is quite a different thing. There was no "stuff" in it. It was like trying to make a meal off the east wind, which it resembled in its hard brilliancy and lack of geniality. It reminded me of the tiresome witticisms of Mr. Justice Darling, who always gives the impression of having just come into court from the study of some jest book or a volume of appropriate quotations. The foundation of good talk is good sense, good nature, and the gift of fellowship. Given these things you may serve them up with the sauce of wit, but wit alone never made good conversation. It is like mint-sauce without the lamb.

Fluent talkers are not necessarily good conversationalists. Macaulay talked as though he were addressing a public meeting, and Coleridge as though he were engaged in an argument with space and eternity. "If any of you have got anything to say," said Samuel Rogers to his guests at breakfast one morning, "you had better say it now you have got a chance. Macaulay is coming." And you remember that whimsical story of Lamb cutting off the coat button that Coleridge held him by in the garden at Highgate, going for his day's work into the City, returning in the evening, hearing Coleridge's voice, looking over the hedge and seeing the poet with the button between forefinger and thumb still talking into space. His life was an unending monologue. "I think, Charles, that you never heard me preach," said Coleridge once, speaking of his pulpit days. "My dear boy," answered Lamb, "I never heard you do anything else."

Johnson's talk had the quality of conversation, because, being a clubbable man, he enjoyed the give-and-take and the cut-and-thrust of the encounter. He liked to "lay his mind to yours" as he said of Thurlow, and though he was more than a little "huffy" on occasion he had that wealth of humanity which is the soul of hearty conversation. He quarrelled heartily and forgave heartily—as in that heated scene at Sir Joshua's when a young stranger had been too talkative and knowing and had come under his sledge hammer. Then, proceeds Boswell, "after a short pause, during which we were somewhat uneasy;—Johnson: Give me your hand, Sir. You were too tedious and I was too short.— Mr. ——: Sir, I am honoured by your attention in any way.—Johnson: Come, Sir, let's have no more of it. We offended one another by our contention; let us not offend the company by our compliments." He always had the company in mind. He no more thought of talking alone than a boxer would think of boxing alone, or the tennis player would think of rushing up to the net for a rally alone. He wanted something to hit and something to parry, and the harder he hit and the quicker he parried the more he loved the other fellow. That is the way with all the good talkers of our own time. Perhaps Mr. Belloc is too cyclonic and scornful for perfect conversation, but his energy and wit are irresistible. I find Mr. Bernard Shaw far more tolerant and much less aggressive in conversation than on paper or on the platform. But the princes of the art, in my experience, are Mr. Birrell, Lord Morley, and Mr. Richard Whiteing, the first for the rich wine of his humour, the second for the sensitiveness and delicacy of his thought, the third for the deep love of his kind that warms the generous current of his talk. I would add Mr. John Burns, but he is really a soloist. He is too interesting to himself to be sufficiently interested in others. When he is well under way you simply sit round and listen. It is capital amusement, but it is not conversation.

It is not the man who talks abundantly who alone keeps the pot of conversation boiling. Some of the best talkers talk little. They save their shots for critical moments and come in with sudden and devastating effect. Lamb had that art, and his stammer was the perfect vehicle of his brilliant sallies. Mr. Arnold Bennett in our time uses the same hesitation with delightful effect—sometimes with a shattering truthfulness that seems to gain immensely from the preliminary obstruction that has to be overcome. And I like in my company of talkers the good listener, the man who contributes an eloquent silence which envelops conversation in an atmosphere of vigilant but friendly criticism. Addison had this quality of eloquent silence. Goldsmith, on the other hand, would have liked to shine, but had not the gift of talk. Among the eloquent listeners of our day I place that fine writer and critic, Mr. Robert Lynd, whose quiet has a certain benignant graciousness, a tolerant yet vigilant watchfulness, that adds its flavour to the more eager talk of others.

It was a favourite fancy of Samuel Rogers that "perhaps in the next world the use of words may be dispensed with—that our thoughts may stream into each other's minds without any verbal communication." It is an idea which has its attractions. It would save time and effort, and would preserve us from the misunderstandings which the clumsy instrument of speech involves. I think as I sit here in the orchard by the beehive and watch the bees carrying out their myriad functions with such disciplined certainty that there must be the possibility of mutual understanding without speech—an understanding such as that which Coleridge believed humanity would have discovered and exploited if it had been created mute.

And yet I do not share Rogers's hope. I fancy the next world will be like this, only better. I think it will resound with the familiar speech of our earthly pilgrimage, and that in any shady walk or among any of the fields of asphodel over which we wander we may light upon the great talkers of history, and share in their eternal disputation. There, under some spreading oak or beech, I shall hope to see Carlyle and Tennyson, or Lamb and Hazlitt and Coleridge, or Johnson laying down the law to Langton and Burke and Beauclerk, with Bozzy taking notes, or Ben Jonson and Shakespeare continuing those combats of the Mermaid Tavern described by Fuller—the one mighty and lumbering like a Spanish galleon, the other swift and supple of movement like an English frigate—or Chaucer and his Canterbury pilgrims still telling tales on an eternal May morning. It is a comfortable thought, but I cannot conceive it without the old, cheerful din of contending tongues. I fancy edging myself into those enchanted circles, and having a modest share in the glorious pow-wows of the masters. I hope they won't vote me a bore and scatter at my approach.

ON A VISION OF EDEN

I HAD a glimpse of Eden last night. It came, as visions should come, out of the misery of things. In all these tragic years no night spent in a newspaper office had been more depressing than this, with its sense of impending peril, its disquieting communique, Wytschaate lost, won, lost again; the eager study of the map with its ever retreating British line; the struggle to write cheerfully in spite of a sick and forboding heart—and then out into the night with the burden of it all hanging like a blight upon the soul. And as I stood in the dark and the slush and the snow by the Law Courts I saw careering towards me a motor-bus with great head-lights that shone like blast furnaces on a dark hillside. It seemed to me like a magic bus pounding through the gloom with good tidings, jolly tidings, and scattering the darkness with its jovial lamps. Heavens, thought I, what strangers we are to good tidings; but here surely they come, breathless and radiant, for such a glow never sat on the brow of fear. The bus stopped and I got inside, and inside it was radiant too—so brilliant that you could not only see that your fellow-passengers were real people of flesh and blood and not mere phantoms in the darkness, but that you could read the paper with luxurious ease.

But I did not read the paper. I didn't want to read the paper. I only wanted just to sit back and enjoy the forgotten sensation of a well-lit bus. It was as though at one stride I had passed out of the long and bitter night of the black years into the careless past, or forward into the future when all the agony would be a tale that was told. One day, I said to myself, we shall think nothing of a bus like this. All the buses will be like this, and we shall go galumphing home at midnight through streets as bright as day. The gloom will have vanished from Trafalgar Square and the fairyland of Piccadilly Circus will glitter once more with ten thousand lights singing the praises of Oxo and Bovril and Somebody's cigarettes and Somebody else's pills. We shall look up at the stars and not fear them and at the moon and not be afraid. The newspaper will no longer be a chronicle of hell, nor slaughter the tyrannical occupation of our thoughts.

And as I sat in the magic bus and saturated myself with this intoxicating vision of the Eden that will come when the madness is past, I wondered what I should do on entering that blessed realm that was lost and that we yearn to regain. Yes, I think I should fall on my knees. I think we shall all want to fall on our knees. What other attitude will there be for us? Even my barber will fall on his knees. "If I thought peace was coming to-morrow," he said firmly the other day, "I'd fall on my knees *this very night.*" He spoke as though nothing but peace would induce him to do such a desperate, unheard-of thing. I tried to puzzle out his scheme of faith, but found it beyond me. It rather resembled the naked commercialism of King Theebaw who when his favourite wife lay ill promised his gods most splendid gifts if she recovered, and when she died brought up a park of artillery and blew their temple down. But my barber, nevertheless, had the root of the matter in him, and I would certainly follow his example.

But then—what then? Well I should want to get on to some high and solitary place—alone, or with just one companion who knows when to be silent and when to talk—there to cleanse my soul of this debauch of horror. I would take the midnight train and ho! for Keswick. And in the dawn of a golden day—it must be a golden day—I would see the sun

> Flatter the mountain tops with sovran eye

and set out by the lapping waves of Derwentwater for glorious Sty Head and hear the murmurs from Glaramara's inmost caves and scramble up Great Gable and over by Eskhause and Scafell and down into the green pastures of Langdale. And there in that sanctuary with its starry dome and its encompassing hills I should find the thing I sought.

Then, like the barber, I shall be moved to do something desperate. I shall want some oblation to lay on the altar, and if I know my companion he will not have forgotten his hundred foot of rope or his craft of the mountains and together we will

> Leave our rags on Pavey Ark,
> Our cards on Pillar grim.

And then, the consecration and the offering complete, back to the world that is shuddering, white-faced and wondering, into its Paradise Regained. . . . Why, here is St. John's Wood already. And Lord's! Of course I *must* have a day at Lord's. It will be a part of the ritual of reconciliation. The old players will not be there, for the gulf with the past is wide and the bones of many a great artist lie on distant fields. But we must recapture their music and pay homage to their memory. Yes, I will take my lunch to Lord's—or perchance the Oval—and sit in the sunshine and hear the merry tune of bat and ball, and walk over the greensward in the interval and look at the wicket, and talk for a whole day with my companion of the giants of old and of the doughty things we have seen them do. Haig and Hindenburg, Tirpitz and Jellicoe, all the names that have filled our nightmare shall be forgotten: there shall fall from our lips none but the names of the goodly game—"W. G." and Ranji, Johnny Briggs and Lohmann, Spofforth and Bonnor, Ulyett and Barnes (a brace of them) and all the jolly host. We'll not forget one of them. Not one. For a whole day we will go it, hammer and tongs.

And there are ever so many more things I shall want to do. I shall want to go and see the chestnuts at Bushey Park on Chestnut Sunday. I shall want to send Christmas cards, and light bonfires on the Fifth, and make my young friends April fools on the First, and feel what a tennis racket is like, and have hot cross buns on Good Friday and pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. I shall want to go and sit on the sands and hear nigger minstrels again, and talk about the prospects of the Boat Race, and take up all the pleasant threads of life that fell from our hands nearly four years ago. In short, I shall plunge into all the old harmless gaieties that we have forgotten, have no time for, no heart for, no use for to-day.

But the bus has stopped and I am turned out of Eden into the snow and the slush and the never-ending night. The magic chariot goes on with its blazing lights and a bend in the road quenches the pleasant vision in darkness.

ON A COMIC GENIUS

"LIKE to see Harry Lauder? Of course I should like to see Harry Lauder. But how can I decently *go* and see Harry Lauder with Lord Devonport putting us on rations, with every hoarding telling me that extravagance is a crime, and with Trafalgar Square aflame with commands to me to go to the bank or the post-office and put every copper I have, as well as every copper I can borrow, into the War Loan? Do you realise that the five shillings I should pay for a seat to see Harry Lauder would, according to the estimate of the placards on the walls, buy thirty-one and a half bullets to send to the Germans? Now, on a conservative estimate, those thirty-one and a half bullets ought to——"

"My dear fellow, Harry Lauder has subscribed £52,000 to the War Loan. In going to see him, therefore, you *are* subscribing to the War Loan. You are making him your agent. You pass the cash on to him and he passes the bullets on to the Germans. It is a patriotic duty to go to see Harry Lauder."

I fancy the reasoning was more ingenious than sound, but it seemed a good enough answer to the hoardings, and I went. It was a poor setting for the great man—one of those dismal things called revues, that are neither comedies nor farces, nor anything but shambling, hugger-mugger contraptions into which you fling anything that comes handy, especially anything that is suggestive of night-clubs, fast young men and faster young women. I confess that I prefer my Harry without these accompaniments. I like him to have the stage to himself. I like Miss Ethel Levy to be somewhere else when he is about. I do not want anything to come between me and the incomparable Harry any more than I want anyone to help me to appreciate the Fifth Symphony by beating time with his foot and humming the melody.

And for the same reason. The Fifth Symphony or any other great work of art creates a state of mind, a spiritual atmosphere, that is destroyed by any intrusive and alien note. And it is this faculty of creating a state of feeling, an authentic atmosphere of his own, that is the characteristic of the art of Harry Lauder, and the secret of the extraordinary influence he exercises over his public. If you are susceptible to that influence the entrance of the quaint figure in the Scotch cap, the kilt and the tartan gives you a sensation unlike anything else on the stage or in life. Like Bottom, you are translated. Your defences are carried by storm, your severities disperse like the mist before the sun, you are no longer the man the world knows; you are a boy, trooping out from Hamelin town with other boys to the piping of the magician. The burden has fallen off your back, the dark mountain has opened like a gateway into the realms of light and laughter, and you go through, dancing happy, to meet the sunshine.

This atmosphere is not the result of conscious art or of acting in the professional sense. It would even be true to say that Harry Lauder is not an actor at all. Contrast him with the other great figure of the music-hall stage in this generation, Albert Chevalier, and you will understand what I mean. Chevalier is never himself, but always somebody else, and that somebody else is astonishingly real—an incomparable coster, a serio-comic decayed actor, a simple old man celebrating the virtues of his "Old Dutch." With his great powers of observation and imitativeness he gives you a subtle study of a type. He is so much of an artist that his own personality never occurs to you. If Chevalier came on as Chevalier you would not know him.

But Harry Lauder is the most personal thing on the stage. You do not want him to imitate someone else: you want him to be just himself. It doesn't much matter what he does, and it doesn't much matter how often you have seen him do it. In fact, the oftener you have seen him do it the better you like it. His jokes may be old, but they are never stale. They ripen and mellow with time; they are like old friends and old port that grow better with age. His songs may be simple and threadbare. You don't care. You just want him to go on singing them, singing about the bluebells in the dells and the bonnie lassie, and the heather-r, the bonnie pur-r-ple heather-r, and pausing to explain to you the thrifty terms on which he has bought "the ring." You want to see him walk, you want to see him skip—oh, the incomparable drollery of that demure little step!—you want to hear him talk, you want to hear him laugh. In short, you just want him to be there doing anything he likes and making you happy and idyllic and childlike and forgetful of all the burden and the mystery of this inexplicable world.

He has art, of course—great art; a tuneful voice; a rare gift of voice-production, every word coming full and true, and with a delicate sense of value; a shrewd understanding of the limits of his medium; a sly, dry humour which makes his simple rusticity the vehicle of a genial satire. And his figure and his face add to his equipment. His walk is priceless. His legs—oh, who shall describe those legs, those exiguous legs, so brief and yet so expressive? Clothed in his kilt and his tartan, he is grotesque and yet not grotesque, but whimsical, droll, a strange mixture of dignity and buffoonery. Your first impulse is to laugh at him, your next and enduring impulse is to laugh with him. You cannot help laughing with him if you have a laugh in you, for his laugh is irresistible. It is so friendly and companionable, so full of intimacies, so open and sunny.

He comes to the footlights and talks, turns out his pockets and tells you the history of the contents, or gossips of the ways of sailors, and you gather round like children at a fair. The sense of the theatre has vanished. You are not listening to an actor, but to an old friend who is getting nearer and nearer to you all the time, until he seems to have got you by the button and to be telling his drolleries to you personally and chuckling in your own private ear. There is nothing comparable to this intimacy between the man and his audience. It is the triumph of a personality, so expansive, so rich in the humanities, so near to the general heart, that it seems a natural element, a sort of spirit of happiness, embodied and yet all pervasive.

But perhaps you, sir, have not fallen under the spell. If so, be not scornful of us who have. Be sorry for yourself. Believe me, you have missed one of the cheerful experiences of a rather drab world.

ON A VANISHED GARDEN

I WAS walking with a friend along the Spaniards Road the other evening, talking on the inexhaustible theme of these days, when he asked: "What is the biggest thing that has happened to this country as the outcome of the war?"

"It is within two or three hundred yards from here," I replied. "Come this way and I'll show it to you."

He seemed a little surprised, but accompanied me cheerfully enough as I turned from the road and led him through the gorse and the trees towards Parliament Fields, until we came upon a large expanse of allotments, carved out of the great playground, and alive with figures, men, women, and children, some earthing up potatoes, some weeding onion beds, some thinning out carrots, some merely walking along the patches and looking at the fruits of their labour springing from the soil. "There," I said, "is the most important result of the war."

He laughed, but not contemptuously. He knew what I meant, and I think he more than half agreed.

And I think you will agree, too, if you will consider what that stretch of allotments means. It is the symptom of the most important revival, the greatest spiritual awakening this country has seen for generations. Wherever you go that symptom meets you. Here in Hampstead allotments are as plentiful as blackberries in autumn. A friend of mine who lives in Beckenham tells me there are fifteen hundred in his parish. In the neighbourhood of London there must be many thousands. In the country as a whole there must be hundreds of thousands. If dear old Joseph Fels could revisit the glimpses of the moon and see what is happening, see the vacant lots and waste spaces bursting into onion beds and potato patches, what joy would be his! He was the forerunner of the revival, the passionate pilgrim of the Vacant Lot; but his hot gospel fell on deaf ears, and he died just before the trumpet of war awakened the sleeper.

Do not suppose that the greatness of this thing that is happening can be measured in terms of food. That is important, but it is not the most important thing. The allotment movement will add appreciably to our food supplies, but it will add far more to the spiritual resources of the nation. It is the beginning of a war on the disease that is blighting our people. What is wrong with us? What is the root of our social and spirtual ailment? Is it not the divorce of the people from the soil? For generations the wholesome red blood of the country has been sucked into the great towns, and we have seen grow up a vast machine of industry that has made slaves of us, shut out the light of the fields from our lives, left our children to grow like weeds in the slums, rootless and waterless, poisoned the healthy instincts of nature implanted in us, and put in their place the rank growths of the streets. Can you walk through a London working-class district or a Lancashire cotton town, with their huddle of airless streets, without a feeling of despair coming over you at the sense of this enormous perversion of life into the arid channels of death? Can you take pride in an Empire on which the sun never sets when you think of the courts in which, as Will Crooks says, the sun never rises?

And now the sun is going to rise. We have started a revolution that will not end until the breath of the earth has come back to the soul of the people. The tyranny of the machine is going to be broken. The dead hand is going to be lifted from the land. Yes, you say, but these people that I see working on the allotments are not the people from the courts and the slums; but professional men, the superior artisan, and so on. That is true. But the movement must get hold of the *intelligenzia* first. The important thing is that the breach in the prison is made: the fresh air is filtering in; the idea is born—not still-born, but born a living thing. It is a way of salvation that will not be lost, and that all will traverse.

This is not mere dithyrambic enthusiasm. Take a man out of the street and put him in a garden, and you have made a new creature of him. I have seen the miracle again and again. I know a bus conductor, for example, outwardly the most ordinary of his kind. But one night I touched the key of his soul, mentioned allotments, and discovered that this man was going about his daily work irradiated by the thought of his garden triumphs. He had got a new purpose in life. He had got the spirit of the earth in his bones. It is not only the humanising influence of the garden, it is its democratising influence too.

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Where was then the gentleman?

You can get on terms with anybody if you will discuss gardens. I know a distinguished public servant and scholar whose allotment is next to that of a bricklayer. They have become fast friends, and the bricklayer, being the better man at the job, has unconsciously assumed the rôle of a kindly master encouraging a well-meaning but not very competent pupil.

And think of the cleansing influence of all this. Light and air and labour—these are the medicines not of the body only, but of the soul. It is not ponderable things alone that are found in gardens, but the great wonder of life, the peace of nature, the influences of sunsets and seasons and of all the intangible things to which we can give no name, not because they are small, but because they are outside the compass of our speech. In the great legend of the Fall, the spiritual disaster of Man is symbolised by his exclusion from a garden, and the moral tragedy of modern industrialism is only the repetition of that ancient fable. Man lost his garden and with it that tranquillity of soul that is found in gardens. He must find his way back to Eden if he is to recover his spiritual heritage, and though Eden is but a twenty-pole allotment in the midst of a hundred other twenty-pole allotments, he will find it as full of wonder and refreshment as the garden of Epicurus. He will not find much help from the God that Mr. Wells has discovered, or invented, but the God that dwells in gardens is sufficient for all our needs—let the theologians say what they will.

Not God in gardens? When the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign—
'Tis very sure God walks in mine.

No one who has been a child in a garden will doubt the sign, or lose its impress through all his days. I know, for I was once a child whose world was a garden.

. . . .

It lay a mile away from the little country town, shut out from the road by a noble hedge, so high that even Jim Berry, the giant coal-heaver, the wonder and the terror of my childhood, could not see over, so thick that no eye could peer through. It was a garden of plenty, but also a garden of the fancy, with neglected corners, rich in tangled growths and full of romantic possibilities. It was in this wilder terrain that I had found the hedgehog, here, too, had seen the glow-worm's delicate light, and here, with my brain excited by "The Story of the Hundred Days," that I knew the Frenchmen lurked in ambush while I at the head of my gallant troop of the Black Watch was careering with magnificent courage across the open country where the potatoes and the rhubarb and the celery grew.

It was ever the Black Watch. Something in the name thrilled me. And when one day I packed a little handbag with a nightgown and started out to the town where the railway station was it was to Scotland I was bound and the Black Watch in which I meant to enlist. It occurred to me on the road that I needed money and I returned gravely and asked my mother for half a crown. She was a practical woman and brought me back to the prose of things with arguments suitable to a very youthful mind.

The side windows of the house commanded the whole length of the garden to where at the end stood the pump whence issued delicious ice-cold water brought up from a well so deep that you could imagine Australia to be not far from the bottom.

If only I could get to Australia! I knew it lay there under my feet with people walking along head downwards and kangaroos hopping about with their young in their pockets. It was merely a question of digging to get there. I chose a sequestered corner and worked all a summer morning with a heavy spade in the fury of this high emprise, but I only got the length of the spade on the journey and retired from the task with a sense of the bitter futility of life.

Never was there a garden more rich in fruit. Around the western wall of the house was trained a noble pear tree that flung its arms with engaging confidence right up to my bedroom window. They were hard pears that ripened only in keeping, and at Christmas melted rich and luscious in the mouth. They were kept locked up in the tool shed, but love laughs at locksmiths, and my brother found it possible to remove the lock without unlocking it by tearing out the whole staple from its socket. My father was greatly puzzled by the tendency of the pears to diminish, but he was a kindly, unsuspecting man who made no disagreeable inquiries.

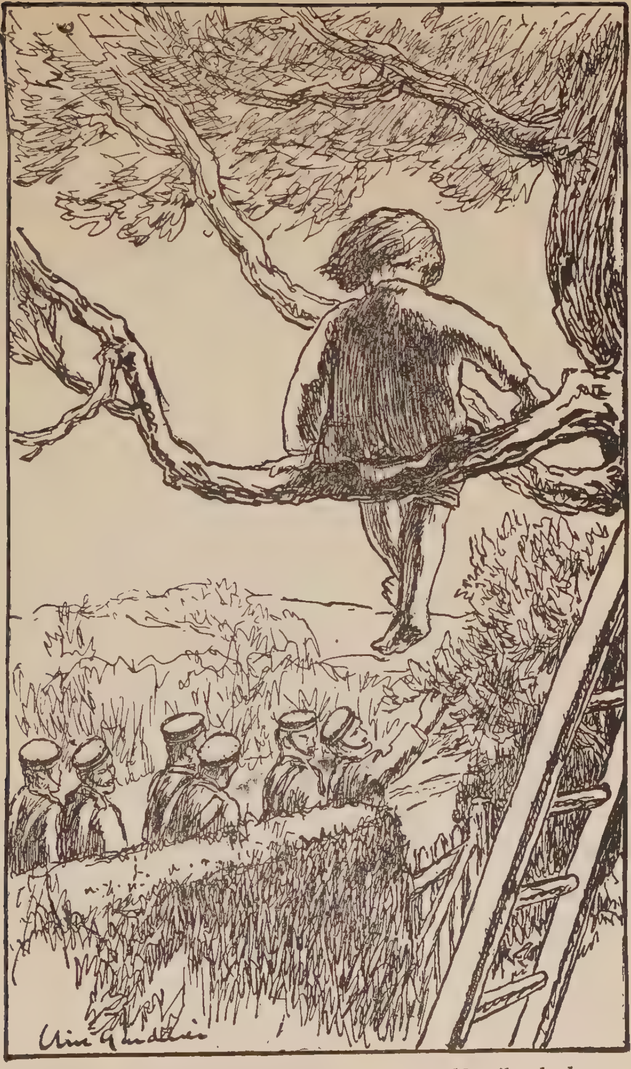
Over the tool shed grew a grape vine. The roof of the shed was accessible by a filbert tree, the first of half a dozen that lined the garden on the side remote from the road. On sunny days there was no pleasanter place to lie than the top of the shed, with the grapes, small but pleasant to the thirsty palate, ripening thick around you. A point in favour of the spot was that it was visible from no window. One could lie there and eat the fruit without annoying interruptions.

Equally retired was the little grass-grown path that branched off from the central gravelled path which divided the vegetable from the fruit garden. Here, by stooping down, one was hidden from prying eyes that looked from the windows by the thick rows of gooseberry bushes and raspberry canes that lined the path. It was my favourite spot, for there grew a delicious gooseberry that I counted above all gooseberries, small and hairy and yellow, with a delicate flavour that is as vivid to-day as if the forty years that lie between now and then were but a day. By this path, too, grew the greengage trees. With caution, one could safely sample the fruit, and at the worst one was sure to find some windfalls among the strawberry beds beyond the gooseberry bushes.

I loved that little grass-grown path for its seclusion as well as for its fruit. Here, with "Monte Cristo" or "Hereward the Wake," or "The Yellow Frigate," or a drawing-board, one could forget the tyrannies of school and all the buffets of the world. Here was the place to take one's griefs. Here it was that I wept hot tears at the news of Landseer's death—Landseer, the god of my young idolatry, whose dogs and horses, deer and birds I knew line by line through delighted imitation. It seemed on that day as though the sun had gone out of the heavens, as though the pillars of the firmament had suddenly given way. Landseer dead! What then was the worth of living? But the wave of grief passed. I realised that the path was now clear before me. While Landseer lived I was cribbed, cabined, confined; but now—— My eyes cleared as I surveyed the magnificent horizon opening out before me. I must have room to live with this revelation. The garden was too narrow for such limitless thoughts to breathe in. I stole from the gate that led to the road by the pump and sought the wide meadows and the riverside to look this vast business squarely in the face. And for days the great secret of my future that I carried with me made the burden of a dull, unappreciative world light. Little did those who treated me as an ordinary idle boy know. Little did my elder brother, who ruled me with a rod of iron, realise that one day, when I was knighted and my pictures hung thick on the Academy walls, he would regret his harsh treatment!

But to return to the garden. The egg-plum tree had no favour in my sight. Its position was too open and palpable. And indeed I cared not for the fruit. It was too large and fleshy for my taste. But the apple trees! These were the chief glory of the garden. Winter apple trees with fruit that ripened in secret; paysin trees with fruit that ripened on the branches, fruit small with rich crimson splashes on the dark green ground; hawthorndean trees with fruit large yellow-green into which the teeth crunched with crisp and juicy joy. There was one hawthorndean most thoughtfully situated behind the tool shed. And near by stood some props providentially placed there for domestic purposes. They were the keys with which I unlocked the treasure house.

A large quince tree grew on the other side of the hedge at the end of the garden. It threw its arms in a generous, neighbourly way over the hedge, and I knew its austere fruit well. Some of it came to me from its owner, an ancient man, "old Mr. Lake," who on summer days used to toss me largess from his abundance. The odour of a quince always brings back to



Whose tassels the bold militiamen. . . . would gaily pluck as they passed.

me the memory of a sunny garden and a little old man over the hedge crying, "Here, my boy, catch!"

I have said nothing of that side of the garden where the vegetables grew. It was dull prose, relieved only by an occasional apple tree. The flowers in the fruit garden and by the paths were old-fashioned favourites, wallflowers and mignonette, stocks and roses. And over the garden gate grew a spreading lilac whose tassels the bold militiamen, who camped not far away, would gaily pluck as they passed on the bright May days. I did not resent it. I was proud that these brave fellows in their red coats should levy tribute on our garden. It seemed somehow to link me up with the romance of war. By the kitchen door grew an elderberry tree, whose heavy and unpleasant odour was borne for the sake of the coming winter nights, when around the fire we sat with our hot elderberry wine and dipped our toast into the rich, steaming product of that odorous tree—nights when the winter apples came out from the chest, no longer hard and sour, but mellow and luscious as a King William pear in August, and when out in the garden all was dark and mysterious, gaunt trees standing out against the sky, where in the far distance a thin luminance told of the vast city beneath.

I passed by the old road recently, and sought the garden of my childhood. I sought in vain. A big factory had come into the little town, and workmen's dwellings had sprung up in its train. Where the garden had been there was now a school surrounded by cottages, and children played on the doorsteps or in the little back yards, which looked on to other little back yards and cottages beyond. My garden with its noble hedge and its solitude, its companionable trees and grass-grown paths, had vanished. It was the garden of a dream.

ALL ABOUT A DOG

It was a bitterly cold night, and even at the far end of the bus the east wind that raved along the street cut like a knife. The bus stopped, and two women and a man got in together and filled the vacant places. The younger woman was dressed in sealskin, and carried one of those little Pekinese dogs that women in sealskin like to carry in their laps. The conductor came in and took the fares. Then his eye rested with cold malice on the beady-eyed toy dog. I saw trouble brewing. This was the opportunity for which he had been waiting, and he intended to make the most of it. I had marked him as the type of what Mr. Wells has called the Resentful Employé, the man with a general vague grievance against everything and a particular grievance against passengers who came and sat in his bus while he shivered at the door.

"You must take that dog out," he said with sour venom.

"I shall certainly do nothing of the kind. You can take my name and address," said the woman, who had evidently expected the challenge and knew the reply.

"You must take that dog out—that's my orders."

"I won't go on the top in such weather. It would kill me," said the woman.

"Certainly not," said her lady companion. "You've got a cough as it is."

"It's nonsense," said her male companion.

The conductor pulled the bell and the bus stopped. "This bus doesn't go on until that dog is brought out." And he stepped on to the pavement and waited. It was his moment of triumph. He had the law on his side and a whole busful of angry people under the harrow. His embittered soul was having a real holiday.

The storm inside rose high. "Shameful"; "He's no better than a German"; "Why isn't he in the Army?"; "Call the police"; "Let's all report him"; "Let's make him give us our fares back"; "Yes, that's it, let's make him give us our fares back." For everybody was on the side of the lady and the dog.

That little animal sat blinking at the dim lights in happy unconsciousness of the rumpus of which he was the cause.

The conductor came to the door. "What's your number?" said one, taking out a pocket-book with a gesture of terrible things. "There's my number," said the conductor imperturbably. "Give us our fares back—you've engaged to carry us—you can't leave us here all night." "No fares back," said the conductor.

Two or three passengers got out and disappeared into the night. The conductor took another turn on the pavement, then went and had a talk with the driver. Another bus, the last on the road, sailed by indifferent to the shouts of the passengers to stop. "They stick by each other—the villains," was the comment.

Someone pulled the bell violently. That brought the driver round to the door. "Who's conductor of this bus?" he said, and paused for a reply. None coming, he returned to his seat and resumed beating his arms across his chest. There was no hope in that quarter. A policeman strolled up and looked in at the door. An avalanche of indignant protests and appeals burst on him. "Well, he's got his rules, you know," he said genially. "Give your name and address." "That's what he's been offered, and he won't take it." "Oh," said the policeman, and he went away and took his stand a few yards down the street, where he was joined by two more constables.

And still the little dog blinked at the lights, and the conductor walked to and fro on the pavement, like a captain on the quarter-deck in the hour of victory. A young woman, whose voice had risen high above the gale inside, descended on him with an air of threatening and slaughter. He was immovable—as cold as the night and hard as the pavement. She passed on in a fury of impotence to the three policemen, who stood like a group of statuary up the street watching the drama. Then she came back, imperiously beckoned to her "young man" who had sat a silent witness of her rage, and vanished. Others followed. The bus was emptying. Even the dashing young fellow who had demanded the number, and who had declared he would see this thing through if he sat there all night, had taken an opportunity to slip away.

Meanwhile the Pekinese party were passing through every stage of resistance to abject surrender. "I'll go on the top," said the sealskin lady at last. "You mustn't." "I will." "You'll have pneumonia." "Let me take it." (This from the man.) "Certainly not" —she would die with her dog. When she had disappeared up the stairs, the conductor came back, pulled the bell, and the bus went on. He stood sourly triumphant while his conduct was savagely discussed in his face by the remnant of the party.

Then the engine struck work, and the conductor went to the help of the driver. It was a long job, and presently the lady with the dog stole down the stairs and re-entered the bus. When the engine was put right the conductor came back and pulled the bell. Then his eye fell on the dog, and his hand went to the bell-rope again. The driver looked round, the conductor pointed to the dog, the bus stopped, and the struggle recommenced with all the original features, the conductor walking the pavement, the driver smacking his arm on the box, the little dog blinking at the lights, the sealskin lady declaring that she would *not* go on the top—and finally going. . . .

"I've got my rules," said the conductor to me when I was the last passenger left behind. He had won his victory, but felt that he would like to justify himself to somebody.

"Rules," I said, "are necessary things, but there are rules and rules. Some are hard and fast rules, like the rule of the road, which cannot be broken without danger to life and limb. But some are only rules for your guidance, which you can apply or wink at, as common sense dictates—like that rule about the dogs. They are not a whip put in your hand to scourge your passengers with, but an authority for an emergency. They are meant to be observed in the spirit, not in the letter—for the comfort and not the discomfort of the passengers. You have kept the rule and broken its spirit. You want to mix your rules with a little good-will and good temper."

He took it very well, and when I got off the bus he said "Good night" quite amiably.

ON THE AMERICAN SOLDIER

I HOPE the young American soldier, with whom we are becoming so familiar in the street, the tube and the omnibus, has found us as agreeable as we have found him. We were not quite sure whether we should like him, but the verdict is very decisively in the affirmative. It has been my fortune to know many Americans in the past, but they were for the most part selected Americans, elderly persons, statesmen, writers, diplomatists, journalists, and so on. Not having been in America I had not realised what the plain, average citizen, especially the young citizen, was like. Now he is here walking our streets and rubbing shoulders with us in sufficient numbers for a general impression to be taken. It is a pleasant impression. I like the air of plenty that he carries with him, the well-nourished body, the sense of ease with himself and the world, the fund of good nature that he seems to have at command, the frankness of bearing, and, what was least expected, the touch of self-conscious modesty that is rarely absent.

If I may say so without offending him, he seems extraordinarily English. Physically he is rather bulkier than the average English youth, and his accent distinguishes him; but these differences only serve to sharpen the impression that he is one of ourselves who has been away somewhere—in a civilised land, where the larder is full, the schools plenty, and the family life homely and cordial. It is very rare that you see what you would call a foreign face in the uniform. This is singular in view of the mighty stream of immigration from Continental countries that has been flowing for three-quarters of a century into the melting pot of the United States; but I do not think the fact can be doubted. The blood is more mixed than ours, but the main current is emphatically British.

Perhaps the difference that is observable could be expressed by saying that the American is not so much reminiscent of ourselves as of our forebears. He suggests a former generation rather than this. We have grown sophisticated, urban, and cynical; he still has the note of the country and of the older fashions that persist in the country. Lowell long ago pointed out that many of the phrases which we regarded as American slang were good old East Anglian words which had been taken out by the early settlers in New England and persisted there after they had been forgotten by us. And in the same way the moral tone of the American to-day is like an echo from our past. He preserves the fervour for ideals which we seem to have lost. There is something of the revivalist in him, something elemental and primitive that responds to a moral appeal.

It is this abiding strain of English Puritanism which is responsible for the tidal wave of temperance that has swept the United States. Already nearly half the States have gone "bone dry," and it is calculated that, perhaps in two years, certainly in five, with the present temper in being, the whole of the Union will have banished the liquor traffic. A moral phenomenon of this sort might have been possible in the England of two or three generations ago; it is unthinkable in the moral atmosphere of to-day. The industrial machine has dried up the spring of moral enthusiasm. It will only return by a new way of life. Perhaps the new way of life is beginning in the allotment movement which is restoring to us the primal sanities of nature. We may find salvation in digging.

It is sometimes said that the American is crude. It would be truer to say that he is young. He has not suffered the disenchantment of an old and thoroughly exploited society. We have the qualities of a middle-aged people who have lost our visions and are rather ashamed to be reminded that we ever had any. But a youthful ardour and buoyancy is the note of the American. He may think too much in the terms of dollars, but he has freshness and vitality, faith in himself, a boyish belief in his future and a boyish zest in living. His good temper is inexhaustible, and he has the easy-going manner of one who has plenty of time and plenty of elbow-room in the world.

For contrary to the common conception of him as a hurrying, bustling, get-on-or-get-out young man, he is leisurely both in speech and action, cool and unworried, equable of mood, little subject to the extremes of emotion, bearing himself with a solid deliberateness that suggests confidence in himself and inspires confidence in him. You feel that he will neither surprise you, nor let you down.

Not the least noticeable of his qualities is his accessibility. The common language, of course, is a great help, and the common traditions also. You are rarely quite at home with a man who thinks in another language than your own. The Tower of Babel was a great misfortune for humanity. But it is not these things which give the American his quality of immediate and easy intercourse. There is no ice to break before you get at him. There is no baffling atmosphere of doubt and hesitancy to get through; no fencing necessary to find out on what social footing you are to stand. You are on him at once—or rather he is on you. He comes out into the open, without reserves of manner, and talks "right ahead" with the candour and ease of a man who is at home in the world and at home with you. He is free alike from intellectual priggishness and social aloofness. He is just a plain man talking to a plain man on equal terms.

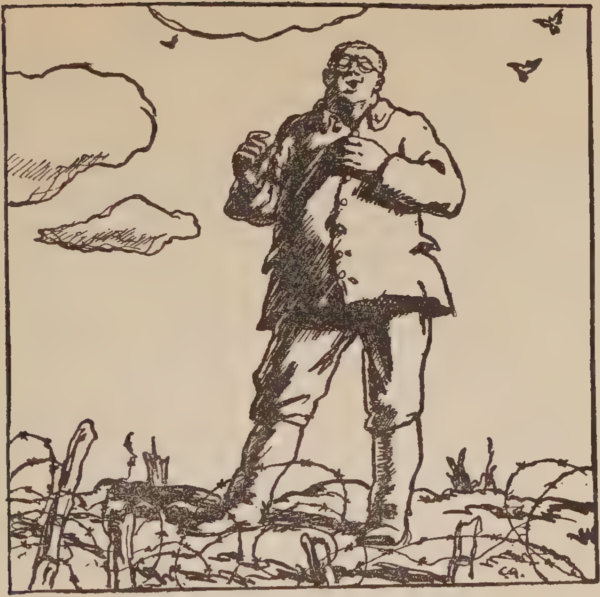
It is the manner of the New World and of a democratic society in which the Chief of the State is plain Mr. President, who may be the ruler of a continent this year and may go back to his business as a private citizen next year. It is illustrated by the tribute which Frederick Douglass, the negro preacher, paid to Lincoln. "He treated me as a man," said Douglass after his visit to the President. "He did not let me feel for a moment that there was any difference in the colour of our skins." It is a fine testimony, but I do not suppose that Lincoln had to make any effort to achieve such a triumph of good manners. He treated Douglass as a man and an equal because he *was* a man and an equal, and because the difference in the colour of their skins had no more to do with their essential relationship than the difference in the colour of their ties or the shape of their boots.

The directness and naturalness of the American is the most enviable of his traits. It gives the sense of a man who is born free—free from the irritating restraints, embarrassments and artificialities of a society in which social caste and feudal considerations prevail as they still prevail in most European countries. Perhaps Germany is the most flagrant example. It used to be said by Goethe that there were twenty-seven different social castes in Germany and that none of them would speak to the caste below. And Mr. Gerard's description of the Rat system suggests that the stratification of society has increased rather than diminished since the days of Goethe.

The disease is not so bad in this country; but we cannot pretend that we have the pure milk of democracy. No people which tolerates titles, and so deliberately sets up social discriminations in its midst and false idols for its worship, can hope for the free, unobstructed intercourse of a real democracy like that of America. It was said long ago by Daniel O'Connell that "the Englishman has all the qualities of a poker except its occasional warmth." It is a caricature, of course, but there is truth in it. We are icy because we are uncertain about each other—not about each other as human beings, but about each other's social status. We have got the spirit of feudalism still in our bones, and our public school system, our titles, and our established Church system all tend to keep it alive, all work to cut up society into social orders which are the negation of democracy.

And as if we had not enough of the abomination, we are imitating the German Rat system with the grotesque O.B.E. We shall get stiffer than ever under this rain of sham jewelry, and shall not be fit to speak to our American friends. But we shall still be able to admire and envy the fine freedom and human friendliness which is the conspicuous gift of these stalwart young fellows who walk our streets in their flat-brimmed hats.

Perhaps when the account of the war is made up we shall find that the biggest credit entry of all is this fact that they did walk our streets as comrades of our own sons. For over a century we two peoples, talking the same language and cherishing the same traditions of liberty, have walked on opposite sides of the way, remembering old grudges, forgetting our common heritage, forgetting even that we gave the world its first and its grandest lead in peace by proclaiming the disarmament of the Canadian-United States frontier. Now that the grudges are forgotten and we have found a reconciliation that will never again be broken and that will be the corner stone of the new world order that is taking shape in the furnace of these days.



'APPY 'EINRICH

THE waiter certainly was rather slow, or perhaps it was that we were hungry and impatient. In any case, I apologised to my guest, a young fellow home on leave, and explained that the waiter was entitled to be a little absent-minded, for he had lost two sons in the war and his only remaining son had been invalided out of the Army, a permanent wreck.

"He tells me," I said, "that the boy never talks about the war or his experiences. He just seems silent and numbed. All that they know is that he killed five Germans, and that he is sorry for one of them.

It happened while he was on patrol. There had been a good deal of indignation at that part of the line because there had been cases reported in which 'hands up' had been a trick for ensnaring some of our men, and the order had been given that the signal was to be ignored and those making it shot at sight. It was twilight and a young German soldier was seen running forward with his hands up. The patrol fired and he fell. He was quite unarmed and alone. On his body they found letters from his sweetheart in England—old letters that he had apparently carried with him all through the war. They showed that he had been at work at some place in London and had been engaged to be married when the war broke out."

"Yes," said my companion, as the waiter came up with the fish. "Yes, when the enemy turns from an abstraction to an individual you generally find there's something that makes you hate this killing business. I don't know that I have felt more sorry for any man's death in this war than for that of a German.

"You've been to F——, haven't you? You know that bit of line north of the M—— road that you reach by the communication trench that is always up to your knees in mud no matter how dry the weather is. You remember how close the lines are to each other at that point—not forty yards apart? I was there in a dull season."

"You were lucky," I said. "It isn't often dull there."

"No, but it was then. The Boche would drop over an occasional whiz-bang as a reminder, and he'd have his usual afternoon cock-shy over our heads at the last pinnacle standing on the ruins of the cathedral in the town behind us. But really there was nothing doing, and we got rather chummy with the fellows over the way. We'd put up a target for them, and they'd do the same for us. They'd got some decent singers among them, and we'd shout for the 'Hate' song or 'Wacht am Rhein' or 'Tannenbaum' or something of that sort and they always obliged, and we gave them the best we had back.

"Yes, we got quite friendly, and one morning one of their men got up on the parapet over the way, bowed very low, and shouted 'Goot morning.' Our men answered, 'Morgen, Fritz. How goes it?' and so on. He was a big, fat fellow, with glasses, and a good-humoured face, and to our great joy he began to sing a song in broken English. And after he had finished we called for more and he gave us more. He had a real gift for comedy; seemed one of those fellows who are sent into the world with their happiness ready made. He laughed a great gurgling laugh that made you laugh to hear it. Our chaps gave him no end of applause, and called for his name. He beamed and bowed, said 'Thank you, genteelmen,' and said that his name was Heinrich something or other.

"So we called him ''Appy 'Einrich,' and whenever our men were bored and things had gone to sleep someone would sing out 'We want 'Einrich. Send us 'Appy 'Einrich to give us a song.' And up would come Heinrich on to the parapet, red and smiling and bowing like a prima donna. And off he would start with his programme. He always seemed willing and evidently greatly enjoyed his popularity with our fellows.

"This went on for some time, and then one day we got news that we were to be relieved at once. We were to clear out that night and our place was to be taken by a Scotch regiment. You need not be told that we were glad. Life in the trenches when there is nothing doing is about as deadly a weariness as man has invented. We got our kit together and when night fell and our relief had come we marched back under the stars through F—— towards B——.

"We had been too much occupied with the prospect of release to give a thought to the fellows over the road or to Heinrich. I remembered him afterwards and hoped that someone had told the new men that Heinrich was a good sort and would always give them a bit of fun, if he was asked, or even if he wasn't asked.

"Some weeks afterwards at B—— I ran across a man in the Scotch regiment which had followed us in the trenches on the M—— road, and we talked about things there. 'And how did you get on with Heinrich?' I asked. 'Heinrich?' he said, 'who is he?' 'Why, surely,' said I, 'you know Heinrich, the fat fellow across the way, who gets up on the parapet and says "Goot morning," and sings comic songs?' 'Never heard of him,' he said. 'Ah,' I said, 'he would have heard we were relieved and didn't find you so responsive a crowd as we were.' 'Never heard of him,' he repeated—then, after a pause, he added, 'There was an incident the morning after we took over the line. Some of our fellows saw a bulky Boche climbing on to the parapet just across the way and had a little target practice, and he went down in a heap.' 'That was him,' I said, 'that was 'Appy 'Einrich. What a beastly business war is, and what ungrateful beggars we were to forget him!'

"Yes, a beastly business, killing men," he added. "I don't wonder the waiter's son doesn't want to talk about it. We shall all be glad to forget when we come out of hell."

ON FEAR

I AM disposed to agree with Captain Dolbey that the man who knows no fear exists only in the imagination of the lady novelist or those who fight their battles at the base. He is invented because these naïve people suppose that a hero who is conscious of fear ceases to be a hero. But the truth surely is that there would be no merit in being brave if you had no fear. The real victory of the hero is not over outward circumstance, but over himself. One of the bravest men of our time is a man who was born timid and nervous and suffered tortures of apprenhension, and who set himself to the deliberate conquest of his fears by challenging every danger that crossed his path and even going out of his way to meet the things he dreaded. By sheer will he beat down the enemy within, and to the external world he seemed like a man who knew no fear. But the very essence of his heroism was that he had fought fear and won.

It is time we got rid of the notion that there is anything discreditable in knowing fear. You might as well say that there is something discreditable in being tempted to tell a falsehood. The virtue is not in having no temptation to lie, but in being tempted to lie and yet telling the truth. And the more you are tempted the more splendid is the resistance. Without temptation you may make a plaster saint, but not a human hero. That is why the familiar story of Nelson when a boy—"Fear! grandmother. I never saw fear. What is it?"—is so essentially false. Nelson did some of the bravest things ever done by man. They were brave to the brink of recklessness. The whole episode of the battle of Copenhagen was a breathless challenge to all the dictates of prudence. On the facts one would be compelled to admit that it was an act of uncalculating recklessness, except for one incident which flashes a sudden light on the mind of Nelson and reveals his astonishing command of himself and of circumstance. When the issue was trembling in the balance and every moment lost might mean disaster, he prepared his audacious message of terms to the Crown Prince ashore. It was a magnificent piece of what, in these days, we should call *camouflage*. When he had written it, a wafer was given him, but he ordered a candle to be brought from the cockpit and sealed the letter with wax, affixing a larger seal than he ordinarily used. "This," said he, "is no time to appear hurried and informal." With such triumphant self-possession could he trample on fear when he had a great end in view. But when there was nothing at stake he could be as fearful as anybody, as in the accident to his carriage, recorded, I think, in Southey's "Life of Nelson."

That incident of young Swinburne's climb of Culver Cliff, in the Isle of Wight, expresses the common-sense of the matter very well. At the age of seventeen he wanted to be a cavalry officer, and he decided to climb Culver Cliff, which was believed to be impregnable, "as a chance of testing my nerve in the face of death which could not be surpassed." He performed the feat, and then confessed his hardihood to his mother.

"Of course," he said, "she wanted to know why I had done such a thing, and when I told her she laughed a short, sweet laugh, most satisfactory to the young ear, and said, 'Nobody ever thought you were a coward, my boy.' I said that was all very well, but how could I tell till I tried? 'But you won't do it again?' she said. I replied, 'Of course not—where would be the fun?'"

It was not that he had no fear: it was that he wanted to convince himself that he was able to master his fear when the emergency came. Having discovered that he had fear under his control there was no sense in taking risks for the mere sake of taking them.

Most fears are purely subjective, the phantoms of a too vivid mind. I was looking over a deserted house situated in large grounds in the country the other day. It had been empty since the beginning of the war. Up to then it had been occupied by a man in the shipping trade. On the day that war was declared he rushed into the house and cried, "We have declared war on Germany, I am ruined." Then he went out and shot himself. Had his mind been disciplined against panic he would have mastered his fears, and would have discovered that he had the luck to be in a trade which has benefited by the war more, perhaps, than any other.

In this case it was the sudden impact of fear that overthrew reason from its balance, but in other cases fear is a maggot in the brain that grows by brooding. There is a story of Maupassant's, which illustrates how a man who is not a coward may literally die of fright, by dwelling upon fear. He had resented the conduct of a man in a restaurant, who had stared insolently at a lady who was with him. His action led to a challenge from the offender, and an arrangement to meet next morning. When he got home, instead of going to bed, he began to wonder who his foe was, to hunt for his name in directories, to recall the cold assurance of his challenge, and to invest him with all sorts of terrors as a marksman. As the night advanced he passed through all the stages from anxious curiosity to panic, and when his valet called him at dawn he found a corpse. Like the shipowner, he had shot himself to escape the terrors of his mind.

It is the imaginative people who suffer most from fear. Give them only a hint of peril, and their minds will explore the whole circumference of disastrous consequences. It is not a bad thing in this world to be born a little dull and unimaginative. You will have a much more comfortable time. And if you have not taken that precaution, you will do well to have a prosaic person handy to correct your fantasies. Therein Don Quixote showed his wisdom. In the romantic theatre of his mind perils rose like giants on every horizon; but there was always Sancho Panza on his donkey, ready to prick the bubbles of his master with the broadsword of his incomparable stupidity.

ON BEING CALLED THOMPSON

Among my letters this morning was one which annoyed me, not by its contents, but by its address. My name (for the purposes of this article) is Thomson, but my correspondent addressed me as Thompson. Now I confess I am a little sensitive about that "p." When I see it wedged in the middle of my name I am conscious of an annoyance altogether disproportioned to the fact. I know that taken in the lump the Thompsons are as good as the Thomsons. There is not a pin to choose between us. In the beginning we were all sons of some Thomas or other, and as surnames began to develop this man called himself Thomson and that man called himself Thompson. Why he should have spatchcocked a "p" into his name I don't know. I daresay it was pride on his part, just as it is my pride not to have a "p."

Or perhaps the explanation is that offered by Fielding, the novelist. He belonged to a branch of the Earl of Denbigh's family, but the Denbighs spelt their family name Feilding. When the novelist was asked to explain the difference between the rendering of his name and theirs, he replied: "I suppose they don't know how to spell." That is probably the case of the Thompsons. They don't know how to spell.

But whatever the origin of these variations we are attached to our own forms with obstinate pride. We feel an outrage on our names as if it were an outrage on our persons. It was such an outrage that led to one of Stevenson's most angry outbursts. Some American publisher had pirated one of his books. But it was not the theft that angered him so much as the misspelling of his name. "I saw my book advertised as the work of R. L. Stephenson," he says, "and I own I boiled. It is so easy to know the name of a man whose book you have stolen, for there it is full length on the title page of your booty. But no, damn him, not he! He calls me Stephenson." I am grateful to Stevenson for that word. It expresses my feelings about the fellow who calls me Thompson. Thompson, indeed!

I feel at this moment almost a touch of sympathy with that snob, Sir Frederic Thesiger, the uncle of the first Lord Chelmsford. He was addressed one day as "Mr. Smith," and the blood of all the Thesigers (whoever they may have been) boiled within him. "Do I look like a person of the name of Smith?"

he asked scornfully, and passed on. And as the blood of all the Thomsons boils within me I ask, "Do I look like a person of the name of Thompson? Now do I?" And yet I suppose one may fall as much in love with the name of Smith as with the name of Thesiger, if it happens to be one's own. I should like to try the experiment on Sir F. E. Smith. I should like to address him as Sir Frederic Thesiger and see how the blood of all the Smiths would take it.

It is, I suppose, the feeling of the loss of our identity that annoys us when people play tricks with our names. We want to be ourselves and not somebody else. We don't want to be cut off from our ancestry and the fathers that begat us. We may not know much about our ancestors, and may not care much about them. Most of us, I suppose, are in the position of Sydney Smith. "I found my neighbours," he said, "were looking up their family tree, and I thought I would do the same, but I only got as far back as my great-grandfather, *who disappeared somewhere about the time of the Assizes.*" If we go far enough back we shall all find ancestors who disappeared about the time of the Assizes, or, still worse, ought to have disappeared and didn't. But, such as they are, we belong to them, and don't want to be confounded with those fellows, the Thompsons.

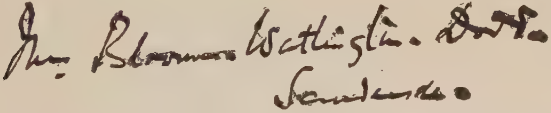
And there is another reason for the annoyance. To misspell a man's name is to imply that he is so obscure and so negligible that you do not know how to address him and that you think so meanly of him that you need not trouble to find out. It is to offer him the subtlest of all insults—especially if he is a Scotsman. The old prides and hatreds of the clans still linger in the forms of the Scotch names, and I believe you may make a mortal enemy of, let us say, Mr. Macdonald by calling him Mr. M'Donald or vice versa. Indeed, I recall the case of a malignant Scotch journalist who used systematically to spell a political opponent's name M'Intosh instead of Mackintosh because he knew it made him "boil," as Stephenson made R. L. S. boil or as Thompson makes me boil.

Nor is this reverence for our name a contemptible vanity. I like a man who stands by his name and distrust the man who buys, borrows, or steals another. I have never thought so well of Bishop Percy, the author of "Percy's Reliques," since I discovered that his real name was Piercy, and that, being the son of a grocer, he knocked his "i" out when he went into the Church in order to set up a claim to belong to the house of the Duke of Northumberland. He even put the Percy arms on his monument in Dromore Cathedral, and, not content with changing his own name, altered the maiden name of his wife from Gutteridge to Godriche. I am afraid Bishop Percy was a snob.

There are, of course, cases in which men change their names for reputable reasons, to continue a distinguished family association and so on; but the man who does it to cover up his tracks has usually "something rotten about him," as Johnson would say. He stamps himself as a counterfeit coin, like

M. Fellaire in Anatole France's "Jocasta." When he first started business his brass plate ran "Fellaire (de Sisac)." On removing to new premises he dropped the parenthesis and put up a plate with "Fellaire, de Sisac." Changing residence again, he dropped the comma and became "Fellaire de Sisac."

It is possible of course to go to the other extreme—to err, as it were, on the side of honesty. I know a lady who began life with the maiden name of Bloomer. She married a Mr. Watlington and became Mrs. Bloomer-Watlington. Her husband died and she married a Mr. Dodd, whereupon she styled herself Mrs. Bloomer-Watlington-Dodd. She is still fairly young and Mr. Dodd, I regret to say, is in failing health. Already I have to write her name in smallish characters to get it into a single line on the envelope. I see the time approaching when I shall have to turn over and write, let us say,



Mrs. Bloomer-Watlington-Dodd-
Saunders.

There is no need to be so aggressively faithful to one's names as all this. It is hard on your children and trying to your friends who may have difficulty in remembering which husband came before the others. After all, a name is only a label, and if it is honest the shorter it is the better.

But the spirit of the thing is right. Let us avoid disguises. Let us stick to our names, be they ever so humble. For myself, I shall remain Thomson to the end of the chapter—and no "p" if you please.

ON THINKING FOR ONE'S SELF

A FRIEND of mine, to whom I owe so much of my gossip that I sometimes think that he does the work and I only take the collection, told me the other day of an incident at a picture exhibition which struck me as significant of a good deal that is wrong with us today. He observed two people in ecstasies before a certain landscape. It was quite a nice picture, but my friend thought their praises were extravagant. Suddenly one of the two turned to the catalogue. "Why this is not the Leader picture at all," said she. "It is No. So-and-So." And forthwith the two promptly turned away from the picture they had been admiring so strenuously, found No. So-and-So, and fell into raptures before that.

Now I am not going to make fun of these people. I am not going to make fun of them because I am not sure that I don't suffer from their infirmity. If I don't I am certainly an exceptional person, for the people who really think for themselves are almost as scarce as virtuous people were found to be in the Cities of the Plain. We are most of us second-hand thinkers and second-hand thinkers are not thinkers at all. Those good people before the picture were not thinking their own thoughts: they were thinking what they thought was the right thing to think. They had the luck to find themselves out. Probably it did not do them any good, but at least they knew privately what humbugs they were, what empty echoes of an echo they had discovered themselves to be. They had been taught—heaven help them!—to admire those vacant prettinesses of Leader and they were so docile that they admired anything they believed to be his even when it wasn't his.

It reminds me of the story of the two Italians who quarrelled so long and so bitterly over the relative merits of Tasso and Ariosto that at last they fought a duel. And as they lay dying on the ground one of them said to the other, "And to think that I have never read a line of them." "Nor I either," said the other. Then they expired. I do not suppose that story is true in fact, but it is true in spirit. Men are always dying for other people's opinions, prejudices they have inherited from somebody else, ideas they have borrowed second hand. Many of us go through life without ever having had a genuine thought of our own on any subject of the mind. We think in flocks and once in the flock we go wherever the bell-wether leads us.

It is not only the ignorant who are afflicted with this servility of mind. Horace Walpole was enraptured with the Rowley Poems when he thought they were the work of a Mediæval monk: when he found they were the work of Chatterton himself his interest in them ceased and he behaved to the poet like a cad. Yet the poems were far more wonderful as the productions of the "marvellous boy" of sixteen than they would have been as the productions of a man of sixty. The literary world of the eighteenth century thought Ossian hardly inferior to Homer; but when Macpherson's forgery was indisputable it dropped the imposture into the deepest pit of oblivion. Yet, as poetry, it was as good or bad—I have never read it—in the one case as in the other.

There is a delicious story told by Anatole France which bears on this subject. In some examination in Paris the Military Board gave the candidates a piece of dictation consisting of an unsigned page. It was printed in the papers as an example of bad French. "Wherever did these military fellows," it was asked, "find such a farrago of uncouth and ridiculous phrases?" In his own literary circles Anatole France himself heard the passage held up to laughter and torn to tatters. The critic who laughed loudest, he says, was an enthusiastic admirer of Michelet. Yet the passage was from Michelet himself, from Michelet at his best, from Michelet in his finest period. How the great sceptic must have enjoyed that evening.

It is not that we cannot think. It is that we are afraid to think. It is so much easier to go with the tide than against it, to shout with the crowd than to stand lonely and suspect in the midst of it. Even some of us who try to escape this hypnotism of the flock do not succeed in thinking independently. We only succeed in getting into other flocks. Think of that avalanche of crazy art that descended on us some years ago, the Cubists and Dottists and Spottists and Futurists and other cranks, who filled London with their shows, and set all the "advanced" people singing their praises. They were not real praises that expressed genuine feeling. They were the artificial enthusiasms of people who wanted to join in the latest fashion. They would rave over any imbecility rather than not be in the latest fashion—rather than not be thought clever enough to find a meaning in things that had no meaning.

We are too timid to think alone, too humble to trust our own feeling or our own judgment. We want some authority to lean up against, and when we have got it we mouth its shibboleths with as little independent thought as children reciting the "twice-times" table. I would rather a man should think ignorantly than that he should be merely an echo. I once heard an Evangelical clergyman in the pulpit, speaking of Shakespeare, gravely remark that he "could never see anything in that writer." I smiled at his naïveté, but I respected his courage. He couldn't see anything in Shakespeare and he was too honest to pretend that he could. That is far better than the affectations with which men conceal the poverty of their minds and their intellectual servility.

In other days the man that dared to think for himself ran the risk of being burned. Giordano Bruno, who was himself burned, has left us a description of the Oxford of his day which shows how tyrannical established thought can be. Aristotle was almost as sacred as the Bible, and the University statutes enacted that "Bachelors and Masters who did not follow Aristotle faithfully were liable to a fine of five shillings for every point of divergence and for every fault committed against the Logic of the Organon." We have liberated thought from the restraints of the policeman and the executioner since then, but in liberating it we have lost our reverence for its independence and integrity. We are free to think as we please, and so most of us cease to think at all, and follow the fashions of thought as servilely as we follow the fashions in hats.

The evil, I suppose, lies in our education. We standardise our children. We aim at making them like ourselves instead of teaching them to be themselves—new incarnations of the human spirit, new prophets and teachers, new adventurers in the wilderness of the world. We are more concerned about putting our thoughts into their heads than in drawing their thoughts out, and we succeed in making them rich in knowledge but poor in wisdom. They are not in fear of the stake, but they are in fear of the judgment of the world, which has no more title to respect than those old statutes of Oxford which we laugh at to-day. The truth, I fear, is that thought does not thrive on freedom. It only thrives under suppression. We need to have our liberties taken away from us in order to discover that they are worth dying for.

ON SAWING WOOD

I do not think this article will be much concerned with the great art of sawing wood; but the theme of it came to me while I was engaged in that task. It was raining hard this morning, and it occurred to me that it was a good opportunity to cut some winter logs in the barn. The raw material of the logs lies at the end of the orchard in the shape of sections of trunks and branches of some old apple trees which David cut down for us last autumn, to enable us to extend the potato-patch by digging up a part of the orchard. I carried some of the sections into the barn and began to saw, but I was out of practice and had forgotten the trick. The saw would go askew, the points would dig in, and the whole operation seemed a clumsy failure.

Then I remembered. You are over-doing it, I said. You are making a mess of the job by too much energy—misdirected energy. The trick of sawing wood is to work within your strength. You are starting at it as if you intended to saw through the log at one stroke. It is the mistake the Rumanians have made in Transylvania. They bit off more than they could chew. You are biting off more than you can chew, and you and the log and the saw get at cross purposes, with the results you see. The art of the business is to work easily and with a light hand, to make the incision with a firm stroke that hardly touches the surface, to move the saw forward lightly so that it barely touches the wood, to draw it back at a shade higher elevation, and above all to take your time and to avoid too much energy. "Gently does it" is the motto.

It is a lesson I am always learning and forgetting. I suppose I am one of those people who are afflicted with too eager a spirit. We want a thing done, but we cannot wait to do it. We rush at the task with all our might and expect it to surrender on the spot, and when it doesn't surrender we lose patience, complain of our tools, and feel a grievance against the perversity of things. It reminds me of the remark which a professional made to me at the practice nets long ago. He was watching a fast bowler who was slinging the ball at the batsman like a whirlwind, and with disastrous results for himself. "He would make a good bowler," said the professional, "if he wouldn't try to bowl three balls at once." Recall any really great bowler you have known and you will find that the chief impression he left on the mind was that of ease and reserve power. He was never spending up to the hilt. There was always something left in the bank. I do not speak of the medium-paced bowler, like Lohmann, whose action had a sort of artless grace that masked the most wily and governed strategy; but of the fast bowler, like Tom Richardson or Mold or even Spofforth. With all their physical energy, you felt that their heads were cool and that they had something in hand. There was passion, but it was controlled passion.

And if you have tried mowing a meadow you will know how much the art consists in working within your powers, easily and rhythmically. The temptation to lay on with all your might is overpowering, and you stab the ground and miss your stroke and exhaust yourself in sheer futility. And then you watch John Ruddle at the job and see the whole secret of the art reveal itself. He will mow for three hours on end with never a pause except to sharpen the blade with the whetstone he carries in his hip pocket. What a feeling of reserve there is in the beautiful leisureliness of his action. You could go to sleep watching him, and you feel that he could go to sleep to his own rhythm, as the mother falls asleep to her own swaying and crooning. There is the experience of a lifetime in that masterful technique, but the point is that the secret of the technique is its restraint, its economy of effort, its patience with the task, its avoidance of flurry and hurry, and of the waste and exhaustion of overemphasis. At the bottom, all that John Ruddle has learned is not to try to bowl three balls at once. He is always master of his job.

And if you chance to be a golfer, haven't you generally found that when you are "off your game" it is because you have pitched the key, as it were, too high? You smite and fail, and smite harder and fail, and go on increasing the effort, and as your effort increases so does your futility. You are playing over your strength. You are screaming at the ball instead of talking to it reasonably and sensibly. Then perhaps you remember, cut down your effort to the scope of your powers, and, behold, the ball sails away on its errand with just the right flight and just the right direction and just the right length. And you purr to yourself and learn once more that the art of doing things is moderation.

It is so in all things. The man who wins is the man who keeps cool, whose effort is always proportioned to his power, who gives the impression that there is more in him than ever comes out. I have seen many a man lose the argument, not because he had the worse case, but because he was too eager, too impatient, too unrestrained in presenting it. What is the secret of the extraordinary influence which Viscount Grey exercises over the mind but the grave moderation and reserve of his style? There are scores of more eloquent speakers, more nimble disputants than he, but there has been no one in our time with the same authority and finality of speech. He conveys the sense of a mind disciplined against passion, austere in its reserve, implacably honest, understating itself with a certain cold aloofness that leaves controversy silent. Take his indictment of Germany as an example. It was as though the verdict of the Day of Judgment had fallen on Germany. Yet it was a mere grave, dispassionate statement of the facts without a word of extravagance or violence. It was the naked truthfulness of it that was so terrible and unanswerable.

And much the most impressive description I have seen of the horrors of war was in a letter of a German artillery officer telling his experiences in the first great battle of the Somme. Yet the characteristic of the letter was its plainness and freedom from any straining after effect. He just left the thing he described to speak for itself in all its bare horror. It was a lesson we people who write would do well to remember. Let us have fewer adjectives, good people, fewer epithets. Remember, the adjective is the enemy of the noun. It is the scream that drowns the sense, the passion that turns the argument red in the face and makes it unbelievable. Was it not Stendhal who used to read the Code Napoleon once a year to teach him its severity of style?

. . . . . .

It is still raining. I will return to the barn and practise the philosophy of moderation on those logs.

VARIATIONS ON AN OLD THEME

I

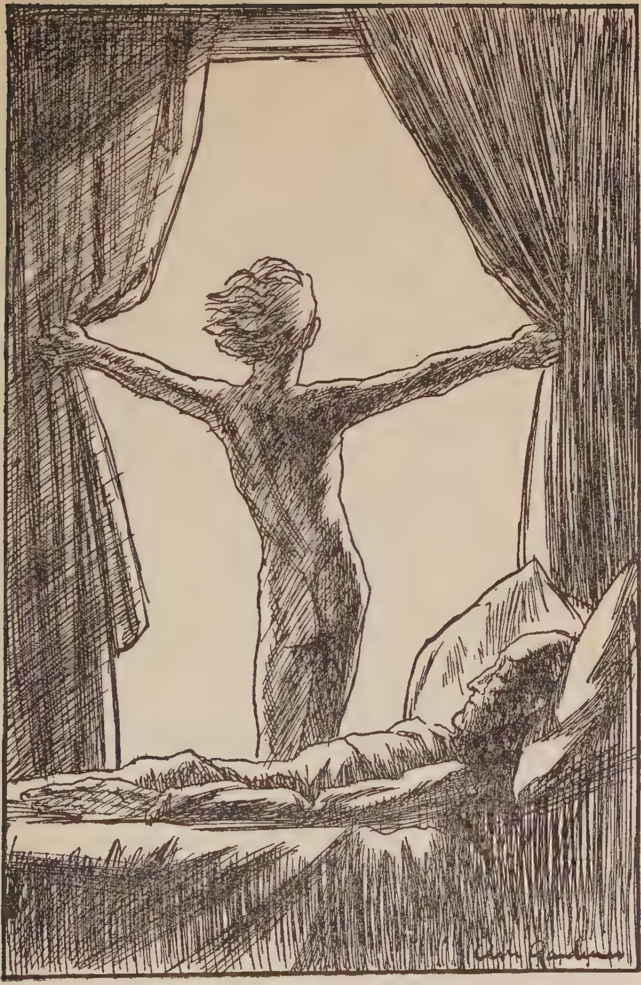
A soldier, whom I met in the train the other day, said that the most unpleasant thing in his experience of the war was the bodies which got caught in the barbed wire in No Man's Land, and had to be left corrupting in the sun. "It isn't healthy," he said. There was no affectation of bravado in the remark. He made it quite simply, as if he were commenting on the inclemency of the weather or the overheating of the carriage. It was not the tragedy of the thing that affected him, but its insanitariness. Yet he was obviously a kindly and humane man, and he talked of his home with the yearning of an exile. "It makes you think something of your home," he said, speaking of the war. "I shan't never want to leave my home when I get out of this, and I shan't never grumble at the missus again," he added, as though recalling the past.

I suppose everyone who has talked to soldiers back from the war has been struck by this attitude of mind towards death. I remember a friend of mine, who was afterwards killed in the first battle of the Somme while trying to save one of his men who had been wounded, telling me of the horror of the first days of his experience of war, and of the subsequent calm with which he saw a man who had been his friend blown to pieces by his side. "It is as though war develops another integument," he said. "Your sensibilities are atrophied. Your nerve ends are deadened. Your normal feelings perish, and you become a part of a machine that has no feelings—only functions."

In some measure the same phenomenon is apparent in the minds of most of us. There has not been since the Great Plague swept Europe 250 years ago such a harvesting of untimely death as we have witnessed during the last two and a half years. If the ghostly army of the slain were to file before you, passing in a rank of four for every minute that elapsed, you could sit and watch it day and night for five years without pause before the last of the phantom host had gone by. And if behind the dead there followed the maimed, blind, and mentally shattered, you could sit on for twenty years and still the end of the vast procession would not be in sight. If we had been asked three years ago whether the human mind could endure such a deliberate orgy of death in its most terrible form, we should have said the thing was incredible. Yet we live through it without revolt, clamour about the shortage of potatoes, crowd the cinemas to see the latest extravagance of Charlie Chaplin, and have forgotten to glance at the daily tale of dead that fills the obscure columns of the newspapers—such of them as trouble any longer to give that tale at all.

It is not merely that we avert our eyes from the facts. That is certainly done. You may go to see the "war pictures" at the cinema and come away without supposing that they represent anything more than a skilfully arranged entertainment—in which one attractive "turn" follows another in swift succession. Once they actually showed a man falling dead, and there was a cry of indignation at such an outrage. Ten millions have fallen dead, but we must not look on one to remind us of the reality behind this pictured imposture. There has never been a lie on the scale of these "war pictures" that leave out war and all its sprawling ugliness, monotony, mutilation, and death.

But it is not this fact that explains our apparent indifference to the Red Harvest. We are like the dyer's hand. We are subdued to what we work in. Even those who have been directly stricken find that they bear the blow with a calm that astonishes themselves. We have got into a new habit of thought about death—in a sense a truer habit of thought. It used to be screened from the light of day, talked



This generation has companioned Death too closely to see him again quite as the hooded terror of old.

of in hushed voices, surrounded with the mystery and aloofness of a terrible divinity. It has come into the open, brutal, naked, violent. We accept it as the commonplace it is, instead of enveloping it in a cloud of tragic fear and strangeness. The heart seems steeled to the blows of fate, looks death steadily in the face, understands that the individual life is merged in issues more vast than this little tale of years that, at the most, is soon told.

It may be that, like the soldiers, our senses are only numbed by events, and that when we come out of the nightmare the old feelings will resume their sway. But it will be long before they recover their former tyranny over the mind. This generation has companioned Death too closely to see him again quite as the hooded terror of old. And that, I think, is a gain. I have always felt that Johnson's morbid attitude towards death was the weakest trait in a fine character, and that George Selwyn's perpetual absorption in the subject was a form of mental disease. Montaigne, too, lived with the constant thought of the imminence of death, so much so that if, when out walking, he remembered something he wanted done, he wrote down the request at once, lest he should not reach home alive. But he was quite healthy in his thought. It was not that he feared death, but that he did not want to be caught unawares.

In this, as in most things, Cæsar shone with that grand sanity that makes him one of the most illuminated secular minds in history. He neither sought death nor shunned it. When Hirtius and Pansa remonstrated with him for going unprotected by a bodyguard, he answered, "It is better to die once than always to go in fear of death." That is the common-sense attitude—as remote from the spirit of the miser as from that of the spendthrift. And that other comment of his on death is equally deserving of recall. He was dining the night before his murder at the house of Decimus Brutus, who had joined the conspiracy against him. As he sat despatching his letters, the others talked of death and of that form of death which was preferable. One of the group asked Cæsar what death he would prefer. He looked up from his papers and said, "That which is least expected." This was not an old man's weariness of life such as that which made Lord Holland, the father of Charles James Fox, write to Selwyn: "And yet the man I envy most is the late Lord Chamberlain, for he is dead and he died suddenly." It was just the Roman courage that accepted death as an incident of the journey.

Of that high courage the end of Antoninus Pius is an immortal memory. As the Emperor lay dying in his tent the tribune of the night-watch entered to ask the watchword. "Æquanimitas," said Antoninus Pius, and with that last word he, in the language of the historian, "turned his face to the everlasting shadow."

With that grave calm the philosophy of the ancient world touched its noblest expression. It faced the shadow without illusions and without fear. It met death neither as an enemy, nor as a friend, but as an implacable fact to be faced implacably. Sir Thomas More met it like a bridegroom. In all the literature of death there is nothing comparable with Roper's story of those last days in the Tower. Who can read that moving description of the farewell with his daughter Margaret (Roper's wife) without catching its pity and its glory? "In good faythe, Maister Roper," said stout Sir William Kingstone, the gaoler, "I was ashamed of myself that at my departing from your father I found my harte soe feeble and his soe stronge, that he was fayne to comfort me that should rather have comforted him." And when Sir Thomas Pope comes early on St. Thomas' Even with the news that he is to die at nine o'clock that morning and falls weeping at his own tidings—"Quiet yourselfe, Good Maister Pope," says More, "and be not discomforted; for I trust that we shall once in heaven see eche other full merily, where we shalbe sure to live and love togeather, in joyfull blisse eternally." And then, Pope being gone, More "as one that had beene invited to some solempne feaste, chaunged himself into his beste apparrell; which Maister Leiftenante espyinge, advised him to put it off, saying that he that should have it was but a javill (a common fellow: the executioner). What, Maister Leiftenante, quothe he, shall I accompte him a javill that shall doe me this day so singular a benefitt? Nay, I assure you, were it clothe of goulde, I would accompte it well bestowed upon him, as St. Ciprian did, who gave his executyoner thirtye peeces of golde. . . . And soe was he by Maister Leiftenante brought out of the Tower and from thence led towardes the place of execution. Wher, goinge up the scaffold, which was so weake that it was readye to fall, he said merilye to Maister Leiftenante, I praye you, Maister Leiftenante, see me safe uppe and for my cominge down let me shift for myselfe. Then desired he all the people there aboute to pray for him, and to bare witnes with him that he should now there suffer deathe, in and for the faith of the Holy Catholicke Churche. Which donne, he kneeled downe; and after his prayers sayed, turned to the executioner, and with a cheerful countenance spake thus unto him: 'Plucke uppe thy spiritts, manne, and be not affrayde to doe thine office; my necke is very shorte, take heede, therfore, thou strike not awrye for savinge of thine honesty.' So passed Sir Thomas More out of this worlde to God, upon the very same daye (the Utas of St. Peter) in which himself had most desired."

The saint of the pagan world and the saint of the Christian world may be left to share the crown of noble dying.

II

I had rather a shock to-day. I was sitting down to write an article on a subject that had still to be found, and had almost reached the point of decision, when a letter which had been addressed to the

Editor of *The Star,* and which he had sent on to me, started another and more attractive hare. It was a letter announcing my lamented demise. There was no doubt about it. There was the date and there was the name (a nice name too), and there were the circumstances all set out in black and white. And the writer wanted to know, in view of all this, why no obituary notice of me had appeared in the columns of the paper I had adorned.

Now this report, however it arose, is, to use Mark Twain's famous remark in similar circumstances, "greatly exaggerated." I am not dead. I am not half dead. I am not even feeling poorly. I had a tooth out a week or two ago, but otherwise nothing dreadful has happened to me for ever so long. I was once nearly in a shipwreck, but that was so long ago that I had almost forgotten the circumstance. Moreover, as all the people in the ship were saved I could not possibly have died then even if I had been on board. And I wasn't on board, for I had left at the previous port of call. It was a narrow escape, but I can't pretend that I wasn't saved. I was.

But though I am most flagrantly and aggressively alive, the announcement of my death has set me thinking of myself as if I were dead. I find it quite an agreeable diversion. Not that I am morbid. I do not share my friend Clerihew's view, expressed in his chapter on Lord Clive in that noble work "Biography for Beginners." You may remember the chapter. If not, it is short enough to repeat:—

What I like about Clive
Is that he is no longer alive.
There's something to be said
For being dead.

That is overdoing the thing. What I find agreeable is being alive and thinking I am dead. You have the advantage of both worlds, so to speak. In company with this amiable correspondent, I have shed tears over myself. I have wept at my own graveside. I have composed my own obituary notice, and I don't think I have ever turned out a more moving piece of work. I have met my friends and condoled with them over my decease, and have heard their comments, and I am proud to say that they were quite nice. Some of them made me think that I might write up the obituary notice in a rather higher key, put the virtues of the late lamented "Alpha of the Plough" in more gaudy colours, tone down the few, the very few, weak points of his austere, saintly, chivalrous, kindly, wise, humorous, generous character—in a word, let myself go a bit more. Old Grumpington at the club, it is true, said that I should be no great loss to the world, and that so far as he was concerned I was one of the people that he could do without. But then Old Grumpington never says a good word for anybody, living or dead. I discounted Grumpington. I took no notice of Grumpington—the beast.

And then I passed from the living world I had left behind to the contemplation of the said Alpha, fallen on sleep, and I found his case no subject for tears. After all, said I, the world is not such a gay place in these days, that I need worry about having quitted it. I have left some dear friends behind, but they will pass the toll-gate too in due course, and join me and those who have preceded me. "What dreams may come!" Well, so be it. I have no fear of the dreams of death, having passed through the dream of life, which was so often like a nightmare. If there are dreams for me, I think they will be better dreams. If there are tasks for me, I think they will be better tasks. If there are no dreams and no tasks, then that also is well. "I see no such horror in a dreamless sleep," said Byron in one of his letters, "and I have no conception of any existence which duration would not make tiresome." And so, dreamless or dreaming, I saw nothing in the circumstances of the departed Alpha to lament. . . .

Meanwhile, I am very well indeed, thank you. If you prick me I shall still bleed. If you tickle me I shall still laugh. And with due encouragement I shall still write.

III

I was going home late last night from one of the Tube stations when my companion pointed to a group—a man in a bowler hat, reading a paper, two women and a child—sitting on a seat on the platform. "There they are," he said. "Every night and any hour, moonlight or moonless, you'll find them sitting there." "What for?" I asked. "Oh, in case there's a raid. They are taking things in time; they are running no risks. You'll see a few at most stations." And as the train passed from station to station I noticed similar little groups on the platforms, sleeping or just staring vacantly at nothing in particular, and waiting till the lights went out and they could wait no longer.

There is no discredit in taking reasonable precautions against danger, but these good people carry apprehension to excess. We need not under-rate the risks of the raids, but we need not make ourselves ridiculous about them. So far as the average individual life is concerned they are almost negligible. Assuming that the circumference of danger of an exploding bomb is 90 yards, and that the Germans drop two hundred bombs a month on London, it is, I understand, calculated that it will be thirty-four years before we have all come in the zone of danger. But the Germans do not drop two hundred bombs a month, nor twenty bombs, probably not ten bombs. Let us assume, however, that they get up to an average of twenty bombs. It will be over three hundred years before we have all come within the range of peril. I do not suggest that this reflection justifies us in going out into the streets when a raid is on. It is true I may not get my turn for three hundred years, but still there is no sense in running out to see if my turn has come. So I dive below ground as promptly as anybody. It is foolish to take risks that you need not take. But it is not less foolish to go and sit for hours every night on a Tube station platform, not because there is a raid, but because there may be a raid.

This is carrying the fear of death to extremities. I have referred to Cæsar's sane axiom on the subject, and to his refusal to take what seemed to others reasonable precautions against danger. In the end he was murdered, but in the meantime he had lived as no one whose life is one nervous apprehension of danger can possibly live. You may, of course, carry this philosophy of fearless living to excess. Smalley, in his reminiscences, tells us that when King Edward (then Prince of Wales) was staying at Homburg he said one day to Lord Hartington (the late Duke of Devonshire), "Hartington, you ought not to drink all that champagne." "No, sir, I know I ought not," said Hartington. "Then why do you do it?" "Well, sir, I have made up my mind that I would rather be ill now and then than always taking care of myself." "Oh, you think that now, but when the gout comes what do you think then?" "Sir, if you will ask me then I will tell you. I do not anticipate."

I do not commend Hartington's example for imitation any more than the example of those forlorn little groups on the Tube platforms. He was not refusing, like Cæsar, to be bullied by vague fears; he was, for the sake of a present pleasure, laying up a store of tolerably certain misery. It was not a case of fearless living, but of careless living, which is quite another thing. But at least he got a present pleasure for his recklessness, while the people who hoard up life like misers, and see the shadow of death stalking them all the time, do not live at all. They only exist. They are like Chesterfield in his later years. "I am become a vegetable," he said. "I have been dead twelve years, but I don't want anyone to know about it." Those people in the Tube are quite dead, although they don't know about it. What is more, they have never been alive.

You cannot be alive unless you take life gallantly. You know that the Great Harvester is tracking you all the time, and that one day, perhaps quite suddenly, his scythe will catch you and lay you among the sheaves of the past. Every day and every hour he is remorselessly at your heels. A breath of bad air will do his work, or the prick of a pin, or a fall on the stairs, or a draught from the window. You can't take a ride in a bus, or a row in a boat, or a swim in the sea, or a bat at the wicket without offering yourself as a target for the enemy. I have myself seen a batsman receive a mortal blow from a ball driven by his companion at the wicket. Why, those people so forlornly dodging death in the Tube were not out of the danger zone. They were probably in more peril sitting there nursing their fears, lowering their vitality, and incubating death than they would have been going about their reasonable tasks in the fresh air above. You may die from the fear of death.

I am not preaching Nietzsche's gospel of "Live dangerously." There is no need to try to live dangerously, and no sense in going about tweaking the nose of death to show what a deuce of a fellow you are. The truth is that we cannot help living dangerously. Life is a dangerous calling, full of pitfalls. You, getting the coal in the mine by the light of your lamp, are living with death very, very close at hand. You, on the railway shunting trucks, you in the factory or the engine shop moving in a maze of machinery, you in the belly of the ship stoking the fire—all alike are in an adventure that may terminate at any moment. Let us accept the fact like men, and dismiss it like men, going about our tasks as though we had all eternity to live in, not foolishly challenging profitless perils, but, on the other hand, declining to be intimidated by the shadow of the scythe that dogs our steps.

IV

It is, I suppose, a common experience that our self-valuations are not fixed but fluctuating. Sometimes the estimate is extravagantly high; sometimes, but less frequently, it is too low. There are people, no doubt, whose vanity is so vast that no drafts upon it make any appreciable difference to the fund. It is as inexhaustible as the horn of Skrymir. And there are others whose humility is so established that no emotion of vain-glory ever visits them. But the generality of us go up and down according to the weather, our health, our fortune and a hundred trifles good or bad. We are like corks on the wave, sometimes borne buoyantly on the crest of the heaving sea of circumstance, then sinking into the trough of the billows. At this moment I am in the trough. I have been passing through one of these chastening experiences which reveal to us how unimportant we are to the world. When we are in health we bustle about and talk and trade and write and push and thrust and haggle and bargain and feel that we are tremendous fellows. However would the world get on without us? we say. What would become of the office? Who could put those schemes through that I have in hand? What on earth would that dear fellow Robinson do without my judgment to lean on? What would become of Jones if he no longer met me after lunch at the club for a quiet and confidential talk? How would *The Star* survive without . . .

And so we inflate ourselves with a comfortable conceit, and feel that we are really the hub of things, and that if anything goes wrong with us there will be a mournful vacuum in society. Then some day the bubble of our vanity is pricked. We are gently laid aside, deflated and humble, the world forgetting, by the world forgot. Our empire has shrunk to the dimensions of a sick-room, and there fever plays its wild dramas, turning the innocent patterns of the wall-paper into fantastic shapes, and fearsome conflicts, filling our unquiet slumbers with dreadful phantoms that, waking, we try to seize, only to fall back defeated and helpless. And then follow the days—those peaceful days—of sheer collapse, when you just lie back on the pillow and look hour by hour at the ceiling, desiring nothing and thinking of nothing, and when the doctor, feeling your stagnant pulse, says, "Yes, you have had a bad shaking."

These are the days of illumination. Outside the buses rumble by, and you know they are crowded with people going down to or returning from the great whirlpool. And you realise that the mighty world is thundering on in the old way as though it had never heard of you. Fleet Street roars by night and day in happy unconcern of you; your absence from "the Gallery" in the afternoon is unnoted by a soul; Robinson gives one thought to you, and then turns to his work as though nothing had happened; Jones misses you after lunch, but is just as happy with Brown; and *The Star*—well, *The Star* . . . yes, the painful fact has to be faced. . . . *The Star* goes on its radiant path as though you had only been a fly on its wheel.

It is a humbling experience. This, then, was all your high-blown pride amounted to. You were just a bubble on the surface, a snowflake on the river—a moment there, then gone for ever. This is the foretaste of death. When that comes the waters will just close over your head as they have closed now—a comment here and there, perhaps friendly, perhaps critical, a few tears it may be, and—oblivion. It is an old story—old as humanity. You remember those verses of Dean Swift on the news of his own death, with what airy jests and indifference it was received in this and that haunt where he had played so great a part. It comes to a card party who affect to receive it in "doleful dumps."

"The Dean is dead (pray what is trumps?")
Then "Lord have mercy on his soul!
(Ladies, I'll venture for the vole).
Six deans, they say, must bear the pall,
(I wish I knew what king to call).
Madam, your husband will attend
The funeral of so good a friend?"
"No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight;
And he's engaged to-morrow night;
My Lady Club will take it ill
If he should fail her at quadrille.
He loved the Dean (I lead a heart);
But dearest friends, they say, must part."

That is the way of it. Your friend is dead: you heave a sigh and lead a heart.

Listen to that thrush outside. How he is going it! He, too, on this bright March morning sings of the world's indifference—the indifference of the joyous, living world to those who have crept to their holes. I hear in his voice the news of the coming of spring, and know that down at "the cottage" the crocuses are out in the garden and the dark beech-woods are turning to brown, and the lark is springing up into the blue like a flame of song. How I have loved this pageantry of nature, these days of revelation and promise. I used to think that I was a part of them, but now I know that the pageant goes forward in sublime unconsciousness that I am no longer in the audience.

And so I lie and look at the ceiling and feel humble and disillusioned. I have discovered that the world goes on very well without me, and I am not sure that it is not worth spending a week or two in bed to learn that salutary lesson. When I return to the world I fancy I shall have lost some of my ancient swagger. I shall feel like a modest intruder upon a society that has shown it has no need of me. I may recover my feeling of importance in time, but in my secret heart I shall know that I am not the hub but only a fly on the mighty wheel of things. I can skip off and no one is any the wiser.

ON CLOTHES

THERE is one respect in which the war has brought us a certain measure of relief. It is no longer necessary to lie awake o' nights thinking about your clothes. There are some people, of course, who like thinking about their clothes. They seem to regard themselves as perambulating shop window models on which to hang things, and if you take away that subject from their conversation they are bankrupt. When I was coming down on the bus the other afternoon I could not help overhearing snatches of a conversation which was going on between two women in the seat behind me. It was conducted with great volubility and seriousness, and it came to me in scraps like this: "No, I don't like that shade. . . . I saw a beautiful hat at So-and-So's at Kensington; only 25s.; it was

. . . Yes, she has nice taste and always looks . . . No, brocaded . . ." And so on without a pause for the space of half an hour.

I don't offer that conversation as representative. I imagine that in the lump women are thinking less about dress to-day from the merely ornamental point of view than they ever did. If you spend twelve hours a day on a bus or a tram in a blue uniform and leggings, or driving a Carter Paterson van in a mackintosh and a sou-wester, or filling shells in a yellow overall, dress cannot occupy quite its old dominion over your thoughts. You will think more about comfort and less about finery. And that, according to Herbert Spencer, is an evidence of a higher intelligence. The more barbaric you are the more you regard dress from the point of view of ornament and the less from the point of view of utility. It is a hard saying for the West End of life. Spencer, to illustrate his point, mentions that the African attendants of Captain Speke strutted about in their goatskin mantles when the weather was fine, but when it was wet took them off, folded them up, and went about naked and shivering in the rain.

A talk like that of the two women on the bus would not be possible among men; but that does not mean that they have souls above finery. It is not good form among them to talk about dress—that is all. But that many of them think about it as seriously as women do, if less continuously, is certain. Pepys' Diary is strewn with such self-revelations as "This morning came home my fine

Camlett cloak, with gold buttons, and a silk suit, which cost me much money, and I pray God to make me able to pay for it." He ought to have thought of that earlier. No one is entitled to order fine clothes and then throw the responsibility for paying for them on the Almighty. At least he might have prayed to God on the subject *before* approaching the tailor. The case of Goldsmith was not less conspicuous. He was as vain as a peacock, and refused to go into the Church because he loved to wear bright clothes. And his spirit is not dead among men. Who can look upon the large white spats of —— as he comes down the floor of the House without feeling that he is as dress-conscious as a milliner?

I am not speaking with disrespect of the well-dressed man (I do not mean the over-dressed man: he is an offence). I would be well-dressed myself if I knew how, but I have no gift that way. Like Squire Shallow, I am always in the rearward of the fashion. I find that with rare exceptions I dislike new fashions. They disturb my tranquillity. They give me a nasty jolt. I suspect that the explanation is that beneath my intellectual radicalism there lurks a temperamental conservatisim, a love of sleepy hollows and quiet havens and the old grass-grown turnpikes of habit. It is no uncommon paradox. Spurgeon had it like many others. He was once rebuked by a friend for his political activity on the Liberal side. Why did he yield to this weakness? "You ought to mortify the Old Man," said his friend. "I do mortify him," said Spurgeon. "You see my

Old Man is a Tory and I make him vote Liberal. That mortifies him." I am conscious of the same conflict within myself, and in the matter of clothes the Old Man of Toryism is an easy winner.

It was so with Carlyle. He raged like a bear with a sore head against the existing political fashion of things, but in the matter of clothes he was a mere antediluvian, and when he wanted a new suit he simply wrote to the little country tailor in far-off Ecclefechan and told him to send another "as before." And so, by taking no thought about the matter, he achieved the distinction in appearance which the people who worry about clothes do not achieve. The flavour of the antique world hung about him like a fragrance, as, but yesterday, it hung about Lord Courtney who looked like a reminiscence of the world of our grandfathers walking our streets to the rebuke of a frivolous generation.

I cannot claim to exhale this fine essence of the past. I am just an ordinary camp follower of the fashions, too perverse to march with the main army, too timid to ignore it, but just hanging on its skirts as it were, a forlorn relic of the year before last. My taste in ties, I am assured, is execrable. My clothes are lacking in style, and my boots have an unconquerable tendency to shapelessness. I put on whatever is handiest without a thought of artistic design. My pockets bulge with letters and books, and I am constantly reminded by well-meaning people that the top button of my waistcoat is unbuttoned. I am perfectly happy until I come into contact with the really well-dressed man who has arranged himself on a conscious scheme, and looks like a sartorial poem. I lunched with such a man a few days ago. I could not help envying the neat perfection of everything about him, and I knew, as his eye wandered to my tie, that there was something there that made him shudder as a harsh discord in music would make me shudder. It may have been the wrong shade; it may have been awry; it may have been anything that it oughtn't to have been. I shall never know.

And it is a great joy to be able not to care. The war has lightened the cloud that hangs over those of us who simply cannot be dressy no matter how much we try. It is no longer an offence to appear a little secondhand. It is almost a virtue. You may wear your oldest clothes and look the whole world in the face and defy its judgments. You may claim that your baggy knees are a sacrifice laid on the altar of patriotism and that the hat of yester-year is another nail in the coffin of the Kaiser. A distinguished Parliamentarian, a man who has sat in Cabinets, boasted to me the other day that he had not bought a suit of clothes since the war began, and I had no difficulty in believing the statement.

That is the sort of example that makes me happy. It gives me the feeling that I am at last really in the fashion—the fashion of old and unconsidered clothes. It is a very comfortable fashion. It saves you worry and it saves you money. I hope it will continue when the war has become a memory. And if we want a literary or historical warrant for it we may go to old Montaigne. When he was a young fellow without means, he says somewhere, he decked himself out in brave apparel to show the world that he was a person of consequence; but when he came to his fortune he went in sober attire and left his estates and his châteaux to speak for him. That is the way of us unfashionable folk. We leave our estates and our châteaux to speak for us.

THE DUEL THAT FAILED

"I THINK," said my friend, "that the war will end when the Germans know they are beaten. No, that is not quite so banal a prophecy as it seems. Wars do not always end with the knowledge of defeat. They only end with the admission of defeat, which is quite another thing. The Civil War dragged on for a year after the South knew that they were beaten. All that bloodshed in the Wilderness was suffered in the teeth of the incontrovertible fact that it was in vain. But the man or the nation which adopts the philosophy of the bully does not fight when the certainty of victory has changed into the certainty of defeat. I have never known a bully who was not a coward when his back was to the wall. The French are at their best in the hour of defeat. There was nothing so wonderful in the story of Napoleon as that astonishing campaign of 1814, and even in 1870-1 it was the courage of France when all was lost that was the most heroic phase of the war. But the bully collapses when the stimulus of victory has deserted him.

"Let me tell you a story. In 1883, having graduated at Dublin, I went to Heidelberg—alt Heidelberg du feine. You know that jolly city, and the students who swagger along the street, their faces seamed with the scars of old sword cuts. I was one of a group of young fellows from different countries who were studying at the University, and who fraternised in a strange land.

"It was about the time when the safety bicycle was introduced in England, and one of our group, a young Polish nobleman who had a great passion for English things, got a machine sent over to him from London. If not the first, it was certainly one of the first machines of the kind that had appeared in Heidelberg. You may remember how strange it seemed even to the English public when it first came out. We had got accustomed to the old high bicycle, and the 'Safety' looked ridiculous and babyish by comparison.

"Well, in Heidelberg the appearance of the young Pole on his 'Safety' created something like a sensation. The sports of the 'Englander' were held in contempt by the students, and this absurd toy was the last straw. It was the very symbol of the childishness of a nation given over to the sport of babes.

"One day the Pole was riding out on his bicycle when he passed a couple of students, who shouted opprobrious epithets at the 'Englander' and his preposterous vehicle. The Pole turned round, flung some verbal change back at them, and rode on his way.

"That evening as he sat in his room he heard steps ascending the stairs, and there entered two students clothed in all the formality of grave business. They had brought the Pole a challenge to a duel from each of the two young fellows with whom he had exchanged words on the road. The challenges were couched in the most ruthless terms. This was to be no mere nominal satisfaction of honour. It was to be a duel without guards or any of those restrictions that are common in such affairs. The weapon was the sword, and the time-limit eight days.

"The seconds having fulfilled their errand went away, leaving the Pole in no cheerful frame of mind. He was only a very indifferent swordsman, and had never cultivated the sport of duelling. Now suddenly he was faced with the necessity of fighting a duel in which he would certainly be beaten, and might be killed, for he understood the intentions of the challengers. It was clearly not possible for him to acquire in a week such expertness with the sword as would give him a chance of victory.

"In this emergency he came along to the little group of which I have spoken. We were playing cards when he entered, but stopped when we saw that something unusual had happened. He told us the story of the bicycle ride and the sequel. What was he to do? He must fight, of course, but how was he to get a dog's chance?

"Now the oldest of our group, and by far the most worldly wise, was an American. He listened to the Pole and agreed that there was no time for him to become sufficiently expert with the sword. 'But can you shoot?' he asked the Pole. Yes, he was not a bad shot. The American took up an ace from a pack of cards and held it up. 'Could you, standing where you are, hit that ace with a revolver?' 'I am not sure that I could hit it,' answered the Pole, 'but I should come very near it.' 'That's all right,' said the American. 'Now to business. These fellows have forgotten something. They're so used to fighting with the sword that they've forgotten there's such a thing as the revolver. And they're trying to bluff you into their own terms. They've forgotten, or don't choose to remember, that, as the challenged party, you have choice of weapons. Now we'll draw up an answer to this letter, accepting the challenge, claiming the choice of weapons, choosing the revolver, and putting the conditions as stiff as we can make 'em.'

"So we sat around the American and composed the reply. And I can assure you it had a very ugly look. The Pole signed it with great delight, and the American and I as seconds delivered it.

"Then we waited. One day passed without an answer—two, three, four, five, six. Still no answer. We were enjoying ourselves. On the evening of the seventh day the seconds reappeared at the Pole's rooms. They brought no acceptance of his challenge, but an impudent demand for the original conditions. The Pole came along to us with the news. 'That's all right,' said the American. 'We've got them on the run. Now to clinch the business.' And once more we sat round in great glee to draft the reply. It was as hot as we knew how to make it. It breathed death in every syllable, and it gave the Germans eight days to prepare for the end at the muzzle of the revolver.

"Again we waited, and again the days passed without a sign. Then on the eve of the eighth day the seconds once more appeared. I was present with the Pole at the time. I have never seen a more forlorn pair than those seconds made as they entered. Their principals, driven into a corner, faced with the alternative of fighting with weapons which did not assure them victory or of accepting the humiliation of running away, had decided to run away. They would not fight on the conditions offered by the Pole, and the seconds were a spectacle of humiliation. Their apologies to us struggled with their indignation at their principals and they went away a chastened spectacle. That night we had a gay gathering with the American in the chair, and I think the incident must have got wind abroad, for thenceforward the Pole rode his Safety in peace and in triumph. . . .

"You may think that story is a trifle. Well it is. But I think it has some bearing on the end of the war."

ON EARLY RISING

There is no period of the year when my spirit is so much at war with the flesh as this. For the winter is over, and the woods are browning and the choristers of the fields are calling me to matins—and I do not go. Spiritually I am an early riser. I have a passion for the dawn and the dew on the grass, and the "early pipe of half-awakened birds." On the rare occasions on which I have gone out to meet the sun upon the upland lawn or on the mountain tops I have experienced an emotion that perhaps no other experience can give. I remember a morning in the Tyrol when I had climbed Kitzbulhhorn to see the sun rise. I saw the darkness changing to chill grey, but no beam of sunlight came through the massed clouds that barred the east. Feeling that my night climb had been in vain, I turned round to the west, and there, by a sort of magical reflection, I saw the sunrise. A beam of light, invisible to the east, had pierced the clouds and struck the mountains in the west. It seemed to turn them to molten gold, and as it moved along the black mass it was as though a vast torch was setting the world aflame. And I remembered that fine stanza of Clough's:—

> And not through eastern windows only,
> When morning comes, comes in the light.
> In front the dawn breaks slow, how slowly,
> But westward, look, the land is bright.

And there was that other dawn which I saw, from the icy ridge of the Petersgrat, turning the snow-clad summits of the Matterhorn, the Weisshorn, and Mont Blanc to a magic realm of rose-tinted battlements.

And there are others. But they are few, for though I am spiritually a son of the morning, I am physically a sluggard. There are some people who are born with a gift for early rising. I was born with a genius for lying in bed. I can go to bed as late as anybody, and have no joy in a company that begins to yawn and grow drowsy about ten o'clock. But in the early rising handicap I am not a starter. A merciful providence has given me a task that keeps me working far into the night and makes breakfast and the newspaper in bed a matter of duty. No words can express the sense of secret satisfaction with which I wake and realise that I haven't to get up, that stern duty bids me lie a little longer, listening to the comfortable household noises down below and the cheerful songs outside, studying anew the pattern of the wall-paper and taking the problems of life "lying down" in no craven sense.

I know there are many people who have to catch early morning buses and trams who would envy me if they knew my luck. For the ignoble family of sluggards is numerous. It includes many distinguished men. It includes saints as well as sages. That moral paragon, Dr. Arnold, was one of them; Thomson, the author of "The City of Dreadful Night," was another. Bishop Selwyn even put the duty of lying in bed on a moral plane. "I did once rise early," he said, "but I felt so vain all the morning and so sleepy all the afternoon that I determined not do it again." He stayed in bed to mortify his pride, to make himself humble. And is not humility one of the cardinal virtues of a good Christian? I have fancied myself that people who rise early are slightly self-righteous. They can't help feeling a little scornful of us sluggards. And we know it. Humility is the badge of all our tribe. We are not proud of lying in bed. We are ashamed—and happy. The noblest sluggard of us all has stated our case for us. "No man practises so well as he writes," said Dr. Johnson. "I have all my life been lying till noon; yet I tell all young men, and tell them with great sincerity, that nobody who does not rise early will ever do any good."

Of course we pay the penalty. We do not catch the early worm. When we turn out all the bargains have gone, and we are left only with the odds and ends. From a practical point of view, we have no defence. We know that an early start is the secret of success. It used to be said of the Duke of Newcastle that he always went about as though he had got up half an hour late, and was trying all day to catch it up. And history has recorded what a grotesque failure he was in politics. When someone asked Nelson for the secret of his success he replied: "Well, you see, I always manage to be a quarter of an hour in front of the other fellow." And the recipe holds good to-day. When the inner history of the battle of the Falkland Islands is told in detail it will be found that it was the early start insisted on by the one man of military genius that gave us that priceless victory.

And if you have ever been on a walking tour or a cycling tour you know that early rising is the key of the business. Start early and you are master of your programme and your fate. You can linger by the way, take a dip in the mountain tarn, lie under the shadow of a great rock in the hot afternoon, and arrive at the valley inn in comfortable time for the evening meal. Start late and you are the slave of the hours. You chase them with weary feet, pass the tarn with the haste of a despatch bearer though you are dying for a bathe, and arrive when the roast and boiled are cleared away and the merry company are doing a "traverse" around the skirting board of the billiard room. Happy reader, if you know the inn I mean—the jolly inn at Wasdale Head.

No, whether from the point of view of business or pleasure, worldly wisdom or spiritual satisfaction, there is nothing to be said in our defence. All that we can say for lying in bed is what Foote—I think it was Foote—said about the rum. "I went into a public-house," he said, "and heard one man call for some rum because he was hot, and another call for some rum because he was cold. Then I called for some rum because I liked it." We sluggards had better make the same clean breast of the business. We lie in bed because we like it. Just that. Nothing more. We like it. We claim no virtue, ask no indulgence, accept with humility the rebukes of the strenuous.

As for me, I have a licence—nay, I have more; I have a duty. It is my duty to lie in bed o' mornings until the day is well aired. For I burn the midnight oil, and the early blackbird—the first of our choir to awake—has often saluted me on my way home. Therefore I lie in bed in the morning looking at the ceiling and listening to the sounds of the busy world without a twinge of conscience. If you were listening, you would hear me laugh softly to myself as I give the pillow another shake and thank providence for having given me a job that enables me to enjoy the privileges of the sluggard without incurring the odium that he so richly deserves.

ON BEING KNOWN

I WENT into a tailor's in the West End the other day to order some clothes. My shadow rarely darkens a tailor's door and this tailor's door it had never darkened before. I was surprised therefore when, after the preliminaries of measurement were finished, the attendant, in reply to a question about a deposit, said: "No deposit is necessary. The name is good enough." I confess I felt the compliment as an agreeable shock. The request for a deposit always jars on me. I know that "business is business" and that in this wilderness of London it is no dishonour to be unknown and no discredit to be formally discredited; but yet . . . And here was a man I had never seen before and who had never seen me who was prepared to execute my order without any sordid assurances of character on my side—simply on my name. Such a tribute needed some recognition. "It will save trouble," said I, "if I pay the account now." And I did so. I fancy the action was a little childish, but I couldn't help it. I really couldn't. I simply had to do something civil and this was the only civil thing that occurred to me.

And then I went out of the shop feeling that I had come suddenly into an unexpected and pleasing inheritance. I knew now something of the emotion of Mr. Sholes, the eminent author—

> Whenever down Fleet Street he strolls
> The policemen look hurriedly up
> And say, "There's the great Mr. Sholes,
> Who writes such delectable gup."

I might not be able to write such delectable gup as Mr. Sholes, but I could write gup good enough to make that fellow in the shop trust me for a six guinea suit. I did not observe that the policeman took any particular notice of me as I passed along. But—"Give me time," said I, addressing the shade of Mr. Sholes. "Give me time. I have made a start in the handicap of the famous. I am known to that excellent shopman. I may yet be known (favourably and admiringly) to the police. I may yet walk the Strand with a nimbus that will challenge Mr. Horatio Bottomley and Mr. Pemberton Billing and the illustrious great. I may yet have the agreeable consciousness that heads are turning in my direction, and that the habitual Londoner is saying to his country cousin, 'That, my dear Jane, is the eminent Mr. Alpha of the Plough who writes those articles in *The Star*. . . . Give me time, Mr. Sholes. Give me time."

But as I walked on and as that momentary flash of the limelight faded from me I became less confident that I wanted to live in it. I became sensible of the pleasures of obscurity. I strolled along untroubled by the curious and enjoyed the pageant of the pavement, the display of dress, the diversity of faces, the play of light in the eyes, the incidents of the streets. I paused in front of shops and fell into a reverie before the window of the incomparable Mr. Bumpus—the window of stately books in noble bindings. I was submerged in the tide of the common life and felt the enfranchisement of the obscure. I could walk which way I pleased and no one would remark me; pause when I liked and be unobserved. But—why, here is Lord French of Ypres coming along. See how heads are turning and fingers are pointing and tongues are wagging—"That, my dear Jane . . ." What a nuisance this limelight must be!

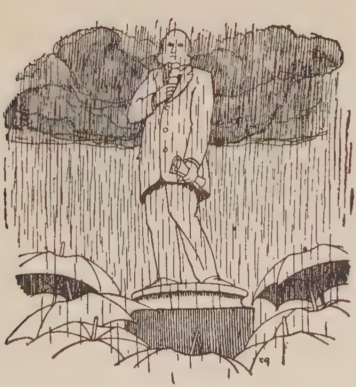
And if you are really conspicuous you cannot trust yourself out of doors—unless you have the courage of John Burns, who does not care two pins who sees him or talks about him. The King, poor man, could no more walk along this pavement as I am doing, rubbing shoulders with the people and enjoying the comedy of life, than he could write to the newspapers, or address a crowd from the plinth of the Nelson Monument, or go to a booking-office and take a ticket for the Tube, or into an A.B.C. shop and ask for a cup of tea, or any of the thousand and one things that I am at liberty to do and enjoy doing without let or hindrance, comment or disturbance. He is the prisoner of publicity. He is pursued by the limelight, as the fleeing soul of the poet was pursued by the hound of heaven. He can't look in Bumpus's. He can't go on to an allotment and dig undisturbed. You cannot have limelight playing about an allotment. In fact, the more one thinks of it the more impoverished his life seems, and so in a lesser degree with all the eminent people who are pursued by the photographer, mobbed in the streets, fawned on by their friends, slandered by their enemies, exalted or defamed in the Press, and dissected in every club smoking-room and bar parlour.

But, you will say, think of the glory of having your name handed down to posterity. It is a very questionable privilege. I am not much concerned about posterity. I respect it, as Wordsworth respected it. "What has posterity done for me that I should consider it?" some one said to him, and he replied, "No, but the past has done much for you." It was a just reminder of our obligations. But it is a lean ambition to pose for posterity. I cannot thrill to the vision of the trumpeter Fame blowing my name down the corridors of time while I sleep on unheeding in

> My patrimony of a little mould
> And entail of four planks.

I am not warmed by the idea of a marble image standing with outstretched arm in the Abbey or sitting on a horse for ever in the streets, wet or fine, or perched up on a towering column to be a convenience to vagrant birds. If fame is often a nuisance to the living, it is only an empty echo for the dead. Spare me marble trappings, good friends, and give me the peace of forgetfulness.

By the time I had reached the end of my walk and my ruminations, I felt less cordial towards that man in the shop. I wished, on the whole, that he had asked for the deposit.



ON A MAP OF THE OBERLAND

I WAS rummaging among my books this morning when I came across Frey's map of the Bernese Oberland, and forthwith forgot the object of my search in the presence of this exhilarating discovery. Mr. Chesterton, I think, once described how he evoked the emotions of a holiday by calling a cab, piling it up with luggage, and driving to the station. Then, having had his sensation, he drove home again. It seemed to me rather a poor way of taking an imaginative holiday. One might as well heat an empty oven in order to imagine a feast. The true medium of the spiritual holiday is the map. That is the magic carpet that whisks you away from this sodden earth and unhappy present to sunny lands and serener days.

There are times when books offer no escape from the burden of things, when as Mr. Biglow says

> I'm as unsoshul as a stone,
> And kind o' suffercate to be alone;

but there are no circumstances in which a map will not do the trick. I do not care whether it is a map of the known or the unknown, the visited or the unvisited, the real or the fanciful. It was the jolly map which Stevenson invented in an idle hour which became the seed of "Treasure Island." That is how a map stimulated his fancy and sent it out on a career of immortal adventure. And though you have not Stevenson's genius for describing the adventure, that is what a map will do for you if you have a spark of the boy's love of romance left in your soul. It is the "magic casement" of the poet. I have never crossed the Atlantic in the flesh, but, lord, what spiritual adventures I have had with maps in the enchanted world on the other side! I have sailed with Drake in Nombre de Dios Bay, and navigated the grim straits with Magellan, and lived with the Incas of Peru and the bloody Pizarro, and gone up the broad bosom of the Amazon into fathomless forests, and sailed through the Golden Gates on golden afternoons, and stood with Cortes "silent upon a peak in Darien." I know the Shenandoah Valley far better than I know Wimbledon Common, and have fought over every inch of it by the side of Stonewall Jackson, just as I have lived in the mazes of the Wilderness with Grant and Lee.

Do not tell me I have never been to these places and a thousand others like them. I swear that I have. I have traversed them all in the kingdom of the mind, and if you will give me a map and a rainy day (like this) I will go on a holiday more entrancing than any that Mr. Cook ever planned. It is not taking tickets that makes the traveller. I have known people who have gone round the world without seeing anything, while Thoreau could stay in his back garden and entertain the universe.

But if maps of the unvisited earth have the magic of romance in them, maps of the places you have known have a fascination, no less rich and deep. They, too, take you out on a holiday, but it is a holiday of memory and not of the imagination. You are back with yourself in other days and in other places and with other friends. You may tell me that this was a dreary, rainy morning, sir, and that I spent it looking out over the dismal valley and the sad cornfields with their stricken crops. Nothing of the sort. I spent it in the Bernese Oberland, with an incomparable companion. Three weeks I put in, sir, three weeks on the glaciers. See, there, on this glorious map of Frey's, is Mürren, from whence we started. In front is the mighty snow mass of the Jungfrau, the Mönch and the Eiger, shutting out the glacier solitudes whither we are bound.

There goes our track up the ravine to Obersteinberg and there is the Mütthorn hut, standing on the bit of barren rock that sticks out from the great ice-billows of the Tschingelhorn glacier. Do you remember, companion of mine, the mighty bowls of steaming tea we drank when we reached that haven of refuge? And do you remember our start from the hut at two o'clock in the morning, roped with our guide and with our lanterns lit—and the silence of our march over the snow and ice and beneath the glittering stars, and the hollow boom of distant avalanches, and the breaking of the wondrous dawn over the ice-fields, and the unforgettable view as we reached the ridge of the Petersgrat and saw across the Rhone Valley the great mountain masses beyond—the Weisshorn, the Matterhorn, Mont Blanc, and the rest—touched to an unearthly beauty by the flush of the new risen sun? And the scramble up the Tschingelhorn, and the long grind down the ice-slopes and the moraine to the seclusion of the Lötschenthal? And then the days that followed in the great ice region behind the Jungfrau; the long, silent marches over pathless snows and by yawning crevasses, the struggle up peaks in the dawn, and the nights in the huts, sometimes with other climbers who blew in across the snows from some remote adventure, sometimes alone as in that tiny hut on the Finsteraarhorn, where we paid three and a half francs for a bunch of wood to boil our kettle?

There is the Oberaar hut standing on the ledge of a dizzy precipice. Do you remember the sunset we saw from thence, when out of the general gloom of the conquering night one beam from the vanished sun caught the summit of the Dom and made it gleam like a palace in the heavens or like the towers of the radiant city that Christian saw across the dark river? And there at the end of the journey is the great glacier that leaps down, seven thousand feet, between the Schreckhorn and the Wetterhorn, to the gracious valley of Grindelwald. How innocent it looks on this map, but what a day of gathering menace was that when we got caught between the impassable crevasses, and night came on and the rain came down and . . . But let the magic carpet hasten slowly here. . . .

It was still dark when Heinrich of the Looking Glass leapt up from our bed of hay in the Dolfuss hut, lit the candle and began to prepare the breakfast. Outside the rain came down in torrents and the clouds hung thick and low over glacier and peaks. Our early start for the Gleckstein hut was thwarted. Night turned to dawn and dawn to day, and still the rain pelted down on that vast solitude of rock and ice. Then the crest of the Finsteraarhorn appeared through a rent in the clouds, patches of blue broke up the grey menace of the sky, the rain ceased. Otmar and Heinrich hastily washed the iron cups and plates and swept the floor of the hut, and then, shouldering our rucksacks and closing the door of the empty hut, we scrambled down the rocks to the glacier.

It was 8.15 and the guidebooks said it was a seven hours' journey to the Gleckstein. That seemed to leave ample margin; but do not trust guidebooks in a season of drought when the crevasses are open.

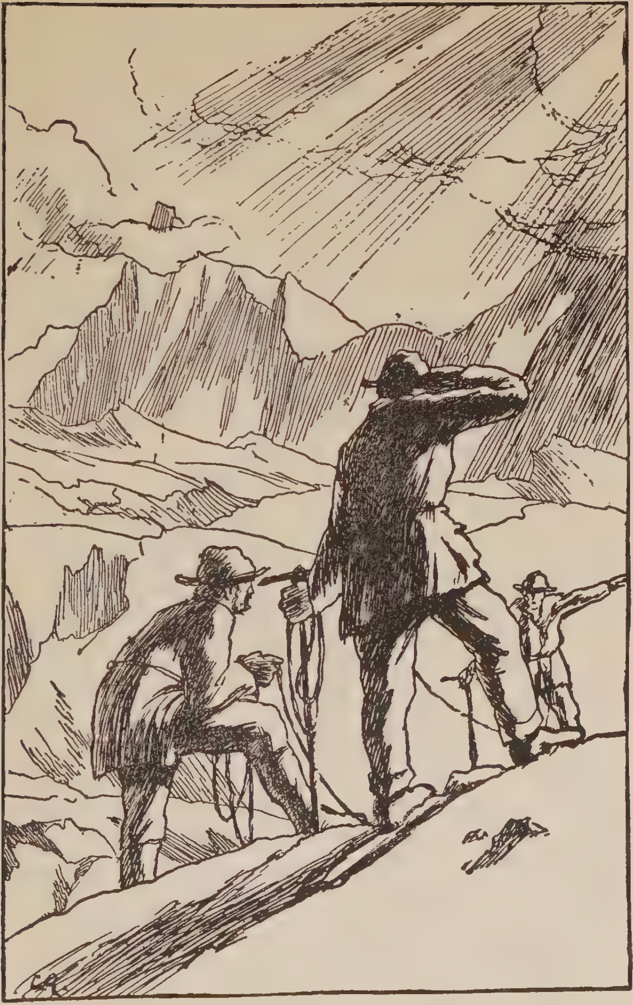
This wisdom, however, came later. All through the morning we made excellent progress. The sun shone, the clouds hung lightly about the peaks, the ice was in excellent condition. Heinrich, who brought up the rear, occasionally broke into song. Now, when Heinrich sings you know that all is well. When he whistles you are in a tight place. For the rest he is silent. Otmar, his brother, is less communicative. He goes on ahead silently under all conditions, skirting crevasses, testing snow bridges to see if they will bear, occasionally pausing to consult his maps. Once only did he burst into song that day—but of that later. Otmar is an autocrat on the ice or the rocks. In the hut he will make your tea and oil your boots and help Heinrich to wash your cups and sweep the floor. But out in the open he is your master. If you ask him inconvenient questions he does not hear. If you suggest a second breakfast before it is due his silence as he pounds forward ahead humiliates you. If your pace slackens there is a rebuke in the taut insistence of the rope.

It was eleven when we halted for our cold tea and sardines (white wine for Otmar and Heinrich). The pause gave Heinrich an opportunity of taking out his pocket looking-glass and touching up his moustache ends and giving a flick to his eye-brows. Heinrich is as big and brawny as an ox, but he has the soul of a dandy.

It had been easy going on the furrowed face of the ice, but when we came to the snow slope that leads to the Lauteraar saddle our pace slackened. The snow was soft, and we sank at each step up to our shins. Otmar eased the passage up the slope by zigzagging, but it was one o'clock when we came face to face with the wall of snow, flanked by walls of rock which form the "saddle." Otmar led my companion over the rocks; but decided that Heinrich should bring me up the snow face. Step cutting is slow work, and though Otmar, having reached the top of the saddle, threw down a second rope, which Heinrich lashed round his waist, it was two o'clock before that terrible wall was surmounted, and we could look down the great glacier that plunges seven thousand feet down into the hollow where Grindelwald lay with its red roofs and pleasant pastures, its hotels and its tourists.

We had taken nearly six hours to surmount the pass; but we seemed, nevertheless, to have the day well in hand. Four thousand feet down on a spur of the Wetterhorn we could see the slate roof of the Gleckstein hut. It seemed an easy walk over the glacier, but in these vast solitudes of ice and snow and rock vision is deceptive. The distance seems incredibly near, for the familiar measurements of the eye are wanting.

The weather had changed again. Clouds had settled on the mighty cliffs of the Schreckhorn on our left and the Wetterhorn on our right. Mist was rolling over the pass; rain began to fall. We cut short our lunch (cold tea, cold veal, bread and jam), and began our descent, making a wide detour of the glacier to the right in the direction of the Wetterhorn. We descended a rocky precipice that cleaves the glacier, crossed an ice slope on which Otmar had to cut steps, and came in view of Grindelwald, lying like a picture postcard far down below—so immediately below that it



Wherever he turned he was baulked. . . . . .

seemed that one might fling a stone down into its midst.

At half-past three it began to dawn on me that things were not going well. Otmar had, during the past three weeks, been the most skilful of guides over most of the great glacier passes of the Oberland and up many a peak; but so far we had seen nothing like the condition of the Grindelwaldfirn. The appalling slope of this great sea of ice makes a descent in normal times a task of difficulty. But this year the long drought had left open all the yawning crevasses with which it is seamed and its perils were infinitely increased.

Again and again Otmar sought a way out of the maze, taking us across perilous snow bridges and cutting steps on knife edges of ice where one looked down the glittering slope on one side and into the merciless green-blue depths of the crevasse on the other. But wherever he turned he was baulked. Always the path led to some vast fissure which could be neither leapt nor bridged. Once we seemed to have escaped and glissaded swiftly down. Then the slope got steeper and we walked—steeper and Otmar began cutting steps in the ice—steeper and Otmar paused and looked down the leap of the glacier. We stood silent for his verdict. "It will not go." We turned on the rope without a word, and began remounting our steps.

It was half-past four. The mist was thickening, the rain falling steadily. Below, the red roofs and green pastures of Grindelwald gleamed in the sunlight of the valley. Nearer, the slate roof of the Gleckstein on its spur of rock was still visible. Two hours before it had seemed but a step to either. Now they seemed to have receded to another hemisphere.

For the first time there flashed through the mind the thought that possibly we should not reach the hut after all. A night on the glacier, or rather on the dark ridges of the Wetterhorn! A wet night too.

The same thought was working in Otmar's mind. No word came from him, no hint that he was concerned. But the whole bearing of the man was changed. In the long hours of the morning he had led us listlessly and silently; now he was like a hound on the trail. The tug of the rope became more insistent. He made us face difficulties that he had skirted before; took us on to snow bridges that made the mind reel; slashed steps with his ice axe with a swift haste that spoke in every stroke of the coming night. Once I failed to take a tricky snow ridge that came to a point between two crevasses, slipped back, and found myself in the crevasse, with my feet dancing upon nothing. The rope held. Otmar hauled me out without a word, and we resumed our march.

Heinrich had been unroped earlier and sent to prospect from above for a possible way out. We followed at his call, but he led us into new mazes, down into a great cavern in the glacier, where we passed over the ruined walls and buttresses of an ice cathedral, emerging on the surface of the glacier again, only to find ourselves once more checked by impassable gulfs.

It was now half-past five. We had been three and a half hours in vainly attempting to find a way down the ice. The mist had come thick upon us. The peaks were blotted out, Grindelwald was blotted out; the hut was no longer visible. Only an hour and a half of light remained, and the whole problem was still unsolved. The possibility of a night on the ice or the rocks began to approach the sphere of certainty. My strength was giving out, and I slipped again and again in the ice steps. A kind of dull resignation had taken possession of the mind. One went forward in a stupor, responsive to the tug of the rope, but indifferent to all else.

Otmar was now really concerned. He came from a valley south of the Rhone, and was unfamiliar with this pass; but he is of a great strain of Alpine guides, is proud of his achievements—he had led in the first ascent of the Zmutt ridge of the Matterhorn that year—and to be benighted on a glacier would have been a deadly blow to his pride.

He unroped himself, and dashed away in the direction of the ridge of the Wetterhorn that plunged down on our right. We watched him skimming across crevasses, pausing here and there to slash a step in the ice for foothold, balancing himself on icy ridges and vanishing into a couloir of the mountain—first depositing his rucksack on the rocks to await his return. Five minutes passed—ten. Heinrich startled the silence with an halloo—no answer. A quarter of an hour—then, from far below, a faint cry came.

"It will go," said Heinrich, "get on." We hurried across the intervening ice, and met Otmar returning like a cat up the rocks. Down that narrow slit in the mountain we descended with headlong speed. There were drops of thirty and fifty feet, slabs of rock to cross with meticulous foot and hand hold, passages of loose rock where a careless move would have sent great stones thundering on the heads of those before. Once Heinrich lowered me like a bale of goods down a smooth-faced precipice of fifty feet. Once he cried: "Quick: it is dangerous," and looking up at the crest of the Wetterhorn I saw a huge block of ice poised perilously above our downward path.

The night was now upon us. We were wet to the skin. A thunderstorm of exceptional violence added to the grimness of the setting. But we were down the ridge at last. We raced across a narrow tongue of the glacier and were safe on the spur of rocks where we knew the Gleckstein hut to be. But there was no light to guide us. We scrambled breathlessly over boulders and across torrents from the Wetterhorn, each of us hardly visibly to the other in the thickening mist, save when the blaze of lightning flashed the scene into sudden and spectral clearness. At last we struck a rough mountain path, and five minutes later we lifted the latch of the hut.

"What is the time, Heinrich?"

"Half-past eight."

"What would you have done, Otmar, if we had been benighted?"

Otmar did not hear. But as he got the wood and made the fire, and emptied the rucksacks of our provisions, he began to sing in a pleasant tenor voice. And Heinrich joined in with his full bass.

And presently, stripped of our wet clothes and wrapped in blankets, we sat down to a glorious meal of steaming tea—in an iron teapot as large as a pail—tongue, soup, potted chicken, and jam.

"That was a narrow escape from a night on the mountains," I said.

"It is a very foolish glacier," said Heinrich.

Otmar said nothing.

Five hours later Otmar woke us from our bed of hay.

"It is fine," he said. "The Wetterhorn will go."

As I look up it is still raining and the sad sheaves still stand in the sodden fields. But I have been a journey. I have had three weeks in the Oberland—three weeks of summer days with a world at peace, the world that seems like a dream we once had, so remote has it become and so incredible. I roll up my magic carpet and bless the man who invented maps for the solace of men.

ON A TALK IN A BUS

I JUMPED on to a bus in Fleet Street the other evening and took a seat against the door. Opposite me sat a young woman in a conductor's dress, who carried on a lively conversation with the woman conductor in charge of the bus. There were the usual criticisms of the habits and wickedness of passengers, and then the conductor inside asked the other at the door how "Flo" was getting on at the job and whether she was "sticking it out."

"Pretty girl, ain't she?" she said.

"Well, I can't see where the pretty comes in," replied the other.

"Have you seen her when she has her hat off? She's pretty then."

"Can't see what difference that would make."

"She's got nice eyes."

"Never see anything particular about her eyes."

"Well, she's a nice kid, anyway."

"Yes, she's a nice kid all right, but I can't see the pretty about her—not a little bit. Pretty!" She tossed her head and looked indignant, almost hurt, as though she had received some secret personal affront.

I do not think she had. It was more probable that on a subject about which she felt deeply she had suffered a painful shock. She liked "Flo," thought her "a nice kid," but mere personal affection could not be permitted to compromise the stern truth about a sacred subject like "prettiness."

The little incident interested me because it illustrated one of the great differences between the sexes. You have only to try to turn that conversation into masculine terms to see how wide that difference is. Tom and Bill might have a hundred things to say about Jack. They might agree that he was a liar or an honest chap, that he drank too much or didn't drink enough, that he was mean or generous; but there is one thing it would never occur to them to discuss. It would never occur to them to discuss his looks, to talk about his eyes, to consider whether he was more beautiful with or without his hat. They might say that he looked merry or miserable, sulky or pleasant, but that would have reference to Jack's character and moral aptitudes and not to any æsthetic consideration.

But this conversation about "Flo" was entirely æsthetic. The question of her moral traits only came in as a means of dodging the main issue. The main issue was whether she was pretty, and it was evidently a very important issue indeed.

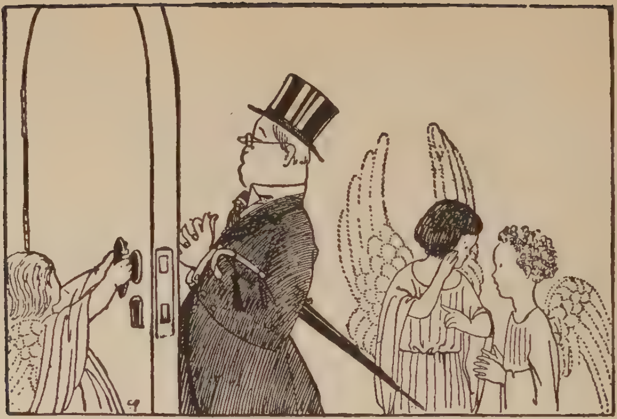
It is this interest of women in their own sex as works of art that distinguishes them from men. Men have no interest in their own sex in that sense. Sit on a bus and see what interests the male passenger.

It is not his fellow-males. He does not sit and study their clothes, and make mental notes on their claims to beauty. If he is interested in his fellow-passengers at all it is the other sex that appeals to him. His own sex has no pictorial attraction for him. But a woman is interested in women and women only. It is their clothes that her eye wanders over with mild envy or disapproval. You almost hear her mind recording the price of that muff, those furs, the hat and the boots. At the end of her survey you feel that she knows what everything cost, what are the wearer's ambitions, social status, place of residence—in fact, all about her. And she is equally concerned about her physical qualities. She will watch a pretty face with open admiration, and pay it the same sort of tribute that she would pay to a beautiful picture or any other work of art. "What a pretty woman!" "What lovely hair that girl has!"

This is not a peculiarity of our own people alone. Not long ago I went with two French officers over a great munitions factory near Paris. We were accompanied by a clever little woman who was secretary to the head of one of the departments, and who acted as guide. We went through great shops where thousands of women were working, and as we passed along I noticed that every eye fell on the little woman. I became so interested in this human fact that I forgot to give my attention to the machinery. And to be honest I am always ready to turn away from machinery, which to me is much less interesting than human nature. I think I can say with truth that not one woman in all those thousands failed to scan our guide or bothered to give one glance at the officers. Yet they were fine fellows and obviously important persons, while the guide was common-place in appearance and quite plainly dressed.

There are of course women who dress and comport themselves with an eye to male admiration as well as female envy and appreciation. They are the women of the bold eye, which is not the same thing as the brave eye. But taking women in the lump, it is their own sex they are interested in. They devote enormous attention to dress, but they do so for each other's enjoyment. They have a passion for personal beauty, but it is the personal beauty of their own sex that appeals to them. No doubt there is a sexual motive underlying this fact. It is the motive expressed in " 'My face is my fortune, sir,' she said." The desire to be pretty is ultimately the desire to be matrimonially fortunate. Bill's success in life has no relation to his looks. He may be as ugly as sin, but if he has strong arms, a good digestion, and a sound mind he will do as well as another. Some of the plainest men in England have sat on the Woolsack. Plain women, it is true, have come to eminence. Catherine Sedley, the mistress of James II., is a case in point. She herself was puzzled to explain her influence over that sour fanatic-libertine, for as, she said, "I have no beauty and he has not the faculty to appreciate my intelligence." But the exceptions prove the rule. Prettiness is the woman's commodity. It is the badge of her servitude. And behind that little conversation in the bus about "Flo's" claims to prettiness was a very practical, though unformed, consideration of her prospects in life.

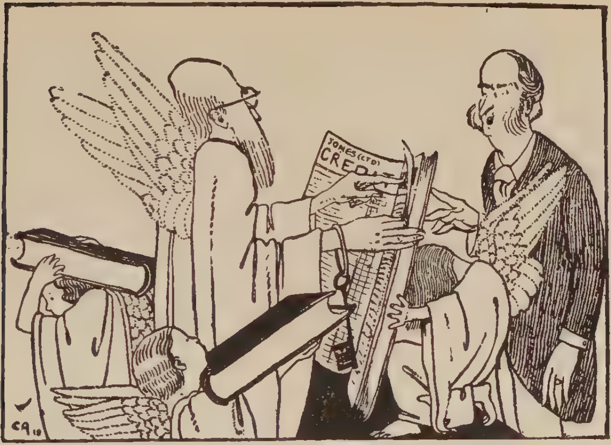
What will be the effect of the war upon "Flo" and her kind? She has found that she has an independent, non-sexual importance to society, that she has a career which has nothing to do with prettiness, that she can win her bread with her mental and physical faculties as easily as a man. She has tasted freedom and discovered herself. The discovery will give her a new independence of outlook, a more self-confident view of her place in society, a greater respect for the hard practical things of life. She will still desire to be pretty and to have the admiration of her sex, but the desire will have a sounder foundation than in the past. It will no longer be her career. It will be her ornament. It will decorate the fact that she can run a bus as well as a man.



ON VIRTUES THAT DON'T COUNT

I often think that when we go down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat we shall all be greatly astonished at the credit and debit items we shall find against our names in the ledger of our life. We shall discover that many of the virtues which we thought would give us a thumping credit balance have not been recorded at all, and that some of our failings have by the magic of celestial book-keeping been entered on the credit side. The fact is that our virtues are often no virtues at all. They may even only be vices, seen in reverse.

Take Smithson Spinks—everyone knows the Smithson Spinks type. What a reputation for generosity the fellow has. What a grandeur of giving he exhales. How noble his scorn for mean fellows. How royal the flash of his hand to his pocket if you are getting up a testimonial to this man, or a fund for that object, or want a loan yourself. No one hesitates to ask



Smithson Spinks for anything. He likes to be asked. He would be hurt if he were not asked. And yet if you track Smithson Spinks's generosity to its source you find that it is only pride turned inside out. The true motive of his giving is not love of his fellows, but love of himself and the vanity of a mind that wants the admiration and envy of others. You see the reverse of the shield at home, where the real Smithson Spinks is discovered as a stingy fellow, who grumbles when the boys want new boots and who leaves his wife to struggle perpetually with a load of debt and an empty purse, while he plays the part of the large-hearted gentleman abroad. He believes in his own fiction, but when he looks in the ledger he will have a painful shock. He will turn to the credit side, expecting to find GENEROSITY written in large and golden letters, and he will probably find instead VANITY in plain black on the debit side.

And I—let us say that I flatter myself on being a truthful person. But am I? What will the ledger say? I have a dreadful suspicion that it may put my truthfulness down to the compulsion of a tremulous nerve. I may—who knows?—only be truthful because I haven't courage enough for dissimulation. It may not be a positive moral virtue at all, but only the moral reflection of a timorous spirit. It needs great courage to tell a lie which you have got to face out. I could no more do it than I could dance on the point of a needle.

Consider the courage of that monumental liar Arthur Orton—the sheer unflinching audacity with which he challenged the truth, facing Tichborne's own mother with his impudent tale of being her son, facing judges and juries, going into witness-boxes with his web of outrageous inventions, keeping a stiff lip before the devastating rain of exposure. A ruffian, of course, a thick-skinned ruffian, but what courage!

Now there may be a potential Arthur Orton in me, but he has never had a chance. I have no gift of dissimulation. If I tried it I should flounder like a boy on his first pair of skates. I could not bluff a rabbit. No one would believe me if I told him a lie. My eye would return a verdict of guilty against me on the spot, and my tongue would refuse its office. And therein is the worm that eats at my self-respect. May not my obedience to the ten commandments be only due to my fear of the eleventh commandment—

that cynical rescript which runs, "Thou shalt not be found out"? I hope it is not so, but I must prepare myself for the revelations of the ledger in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. For they will be as candid about me and you as about Smithson Spinks.

You can never be absolutely sure of a man's moral nature until you have shipped him, figuratively,

> . . . somewheres East of Suez
> Where the best is like the worst,
> Where there aren't no ten commandments,
> And a man can raise a thirst—

until in fact you have got him away from his defences, liberated him from the conventions and respectabilities that encompass him with minatory fingers and vigilant eyes and left him to the uncontrolled governance of himself. Then it will be found whether the virtues are diamonds or paste—whether they spring out of the ten commandments or out of the eleventh. The lord Angelo in "Measure for Measure" passed for a strict and saintly person—and I have no doubt believed himself to be a strict and saintly person—so long as he was under control, but when the Duke's back was turned the libertine appeared. And note that subtle touch of Shakespeare's. Angelo was not an ordinary libertine. He passed for a saint because he could not be tempted by vice, but only by virtue. Hear him communing with himself when Isabella has gone:—

> . . . What is't I dream on?
> O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint,
> With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous

Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue; never could the strumpet,
With all her double vigour, art and nature
Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid
Subdues me quite.

His saintliness revolted from vice, but his love of virtue opened the floodgates of viciousness. What a paradox is man. I think I have known more than one lord Angelo whose virtue rested on nothing better than a fastidious taste, or an absence of appetite.

That is certainly the case with many people who have the quality of sobriety. Abraham Lincoln, himself a total abstainer, once got into great trouble for saying so. He was addressing a temperance meeting at a Presbyterian church, and said: "In my judgment such of us as have never fallen victims (to drink) have been spared more from the absence of appetite than from any mental or moral superiority over those who have fallen." It seemed a reasonable thing to say, but it shocked the stern teetotalers present. "It's a shame," said one, "that he should be permitted to abuse us so in the house of the Lord." They did not like to feel that they were not more virtuous than men who drank and even got drunk. They expected to have a large credit entry for not tippling. Like Malvolio, they mixed up virtue with "cakes and ale." If you indulged in them you were vicious, and if you abstained from them you were virtuous.

It was a beautifully simple moral code, but virtue is not so easily catalogued. It is not a negative thing, but a positive thing. It is not measured by its antipathies but by its sympathies. Its manifestations ar many, but its root is one, and its names are "truth and justice" which even the Prayer Book puts before "religion and piety."

And to return to the Lincoln formula, if you have no taste for tippling what virtue is there in not tippling? The virtue is often with the tippler. I knew a man who died of drink, and whose life nevertheless had been an heroic struggle with his enemy. He was always falling, but he never ceased fighting. And it is the fighting, I think, he will find recorded in the ledger—greatly to his surprise, for he had the most modest opinion of his merits and a deep sense of his moral infirmity.

It is no more virtuous for some men not to get drunk than it is for a Rothschild not to put his hand in his neighbour's pocket in order to steal half a crown. He doesn't need a half-crown, and there is no virtue in not stealing what you don't want. That was what was wrong with the "Northern Farmer's" philosophy that those who had money were the best:—

'Tis'n them as 'as munny as breaks into 'ouses an' steals,
Them as 'as coäts to their backs an' taäkes their regular meäls.
Noä, but it's them as niver knaws wheer a meäl's to be 'ad—
Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.

It was a creed of virtue which looked at the fact and not at the temptation. He will have found a much more complex system of book-keeping where he has gone. I imagine him standing painfully puzzled at the sort of accounts which he will find made up in the "valley of decision."

ON HATE AND THE SOLDIER

"AND when are you going back to fight those vermin again?" asked the man in the corner.

"D'ye mean ole Fritz?" said the soldier.

"I mean those Huns," said the other.

"Oh, there's nothing wrong with ole Fritz," replied the soldier. "He can't help hisself. He's shoved out there in the mud to fight same as we are, and he does the job same as we do. But he'd jolly well like to chuck the business and go home. Course he would. Stands to reason. Anybody would."

It was a disappointing reply to the man in the corner, who obviously felt that the other was wanting in the first essential of a soldier—a personal hatred of the individual enemy. This man clearly did not hate the enemy. Yet if anyone was entitled to hate him he had abundant reason. He had been out since August 1914, had been wounded four times, buried by shell explosion three times, and gassed twice. It was two years since he had been home on leave, and now he was on his way to see his people in the West of England. He talked about his experiences with the calm dispassionateness of one describing commonplace things, quite uncomplainingly, very sensibly, and without the least trace of egotism. He'd been in a horrible spot lately, "reg'lar death-trap," at G——. "Nobody can hold it," he said. "We take it when *we* like, and Fritz, he takes it when *he* likes. That's all there is about it." It was noticeable that he always spoke of the enemy as "Fritz," and always without any appearance of personal animus.

I do not record the incident as unusual. I record it as usual. No one who has had much intercourse with soldiers at the front, whether rank or file, will dispute this. In any circumstance, it is hard to nurse a passion at white heat over a term of years, and it is impossible to do so when you see the ugly business of war at close quarters. You have to be comfortably at home to really enjoy the luxury of hate. I have heard more bitter things from the lips of clergymen and seen more bitter things from the pen of so-called comic journalists than I have heard from the lips of soldiers, and in that admirable collection of utterances of hate in Germany, made by Mr. William Archer, it will be found that the barbaric things generally come from pulpits or the studies of bespectacled professors.

The soldier is too near the foul business, sees all the misery and suffering too close, to be consumed with hate. If he could envy the other fellow he would stand a better chance of hating him. But he sees that Fritz is in no better plight than himself. He is living in the mud among the rats too, and is just as helpless an atom in the machine of war as himself. He sees his body, torn and disgusting, cumbering the battlefield, or hanging limp and horrible on the barbed wire in No Man's Land. It is Fritz's turn to-day; it may be his own to-morrow. And the baser feeling gives place to a general compassion. The chord of a common humanity is struck, and if he does not actually love his enemy he ceases to hate him.

But the man in the corner of the carriage need have no fear that this means that the soldier opposite is a less valuable fighting man in consequence. The idea that you must grind your teeth all the time is an infantile delusion. I should have much more confidence in that quiet, sane, undemonstrative soldier in the face of the enemy than I should have in the people who kill the enemy with their mouth, and prove their patriotism by the violence of their language. I have known many brave men who have given their lives heroically in this war, but I cannot recall one—not one—who stained his heroism with vulgar hate.

The gospel of hate as the instrument of victory, indeed, is not the soldier's gospel at all. There have been few greater soldiers in history than General Lee, and probably no more saintly man. He fought literally to the last ditch, but he never ceased to repudiate the doctrine of hate. When a minister in the course of a sermon had expressed himself bitterly about the enemy, Lee said to him: "Doctor, there is a good old Book which says, 'Love your enemies.' Do you think that your remarks this evening were quite in the spirit of that teaching?" And when one of his generals exclaimed of the enemy, "I wish these people were all dead," Lee answered, "How can you say so? Now, I wish they were all at home attending to their business and leaving us to do the same." And Lee stated his attitude generally when he said: "I have fought against the people of the North because I believed they were seeking to wrest from the South dearest rights. But I have never cherished bitter or vindictive feelings and have never seen the day when I did not pray for them."

There was a striking illustration of the contrast between the soldier's and the civilian's attitude towards the enemy the other day. In the current issue of *Punch* I saw a poem by Sir Owen Seaman (the author of that heroic line, "I hate all Huns"), addressed to the "Huns," in which he said:—

> But where you have met your equals,
>   Gun for gun and man for man,
> We have noticed other sequels,
>   It was always you that ran.

In the newspapers that same morning (March 5th, 1918) there appeared a report from Sir Douglas Haig, in the course of which he said:—

> Many of the hits upon our Tanks at Flesquières were obtained by a German artillery officer who, remaining alone at his battery, served a field gun single-handed until killed

at his gun. The great bravery of this officer aroused the admiration of all ranks.

The same chivalrous spirit breathes through the letters of Captain Ball, V.C., published in the memoir of the brilliant airman. He was little more than a boy when he was killed after an almost unparalleled career of victory in the air. He fought with a terrible skill, but he had no more personal animus for his opponent than he would have had for the bowler whom it was his business to hit to the boundary. In one of his letters to his father he said:—

> You ask me to let the devils have it when I fight. Yes, I always let them have all I can, but really I don't think them devils. I only scrap because it is my duty, but I do not think anything bad about the Huns. He is just a good chap with very little guts, trying to do his best. Nothing makes me feel more rotten than to see them go down, but you see it is either them or me, so I must do my best to make it a case of *them*.

And the gay, healthy temper in which he played his part is revealed in another letter, in which he describes a fight that ended in mutual laughter:—

> We kept on firing until we had used up all our ammunition. There was nothing more to be done after that, so we both burst out laughing. We couldn't help it—it was so ridiculous. We flew side by side laughing at each other for a few seconds, and then we waved adieu to each other and went off. He was a real sport was that Hun.

That is a pleasant picture to carry in the mind, the two high-spirited boys sent out to kill each other faithfully trying to do their duty, failing, and then riding through the air side by side with merry laughter at their mutual discomfiture and gay adieus at parting.

And at the risk of hurting the feelings of the man in the corner I shall recall a letter which shows that even among the enemy of to-day, even among that worst of all military types, the German officer, there are those whom the miseries and horrors of war touch to something nobler than hate. The letter appeared in the *Cologne Gazette* early in the war and was as follows:—

> Perhaps you will be so good as to assist by the publication of these lines in freeing our troops from an evil which they feel very strongly. I have on many occasions, when distributing among the men the postal packets, observed among them postcards on which the defeated French, English and Russians were derided in a tasteless fashion.
>
> The impression made by these postcards on our men is highly noteworthy. Scarcely anybody is pleased with these postcards; on the contrary, every one expresses his displeasure.
>
> This is natural when one considers the position. We know how victories are won. We also know by what tremendous sacrifices they are obtained. We see with our own eyes the unspeakable misery of the battlefield. We rejoice over our victories, but our joy is damped by the recollection of the sad pictures which we observe almost daily.
>
> And our enemies have in an overwhelming majority of cases truly not deserved to be derided in such a way. Had they not fought as bravely we should not have had to register such losses.
>
> Insipid, therefore, as these postcards are in themselves, their effect here, on the battlefields, in the presence of our

dead and wounded, is only calculated to cause disgust. Such postcards are as much out of place in the battlefield as a clown is at a funeral. Perhaps these lines may prove instrumental in decreasing the number of such postcards sent to our troops.

I do not suppose they did. I have no doubt the fire-eaters at home went on fire-eating under the impression that that was what the men at the front wanted to keep up their fighting spirit. But it is not. There is plenty of hate in the trenches, but it is directed, not against the victims of war, but against the institution of war. That is the one ray of hope that shines over the dismal landscape of Europe to-day.

ON TAKING THE CALL

JANE came home from the theatre last night overflowing with an indignation that even the beauty of a ride on the top of a bus in the air of these divine summer nights had not cooled. It was not dissatisfaction with the play or the performance that made her boil with volcanic wrath. It was the vanity of the insufferable actor-manager, who would insist on "taking the call" all the time and every time. There were some quite nice people in the play, it seemed, but the more the audience called for them the more the preposterous "old clo' " man of the stage came smirking before the curtain, rubbing his fat hands and creasing his fat cheeks. "It was disgusting," said Jane. "The creature had been gibbering in the lime-light all night, and the audience were trying to level things up a bit by giving the interesting people a show, and this greedy cormorant snatched every crumb for himself. I hate him. He is a Hun."

The outburst reminded me of a story I once heard about another actor-manager. At the end of the play he went on the stage and found his company bending down in a circle and gazing intently at something on the floor. "What are you looking at?" he asked. "Oh," they chanted in chorus, "we're looking at a spot we've never seen before. It's the centre of the stage."

There are, of course, people who carry the centre of the stage with them. It does not matter where they go or what they play: they dominate the scene. "Where O'Flaherty sits is the head of the table," and where Coquelin stood was the centre of the stage. He needed no placard to remind you that he was someone in particular. You would no more have thought of turning the limelight on to him than you would have thought of turning it on to the moon at midnight or the sun at midday. He just appeared and everyone else became accessory to that commanding presence: he spoke and all other voices seemed like the chirping of sparrows.

And so in other spheres. Take the case of Mr. Asquith, for example, in relation to the House of Commons. It does not matter where he sits. He may go to the darkest corner under the gallery, but the centre of the stage will go with him. When he had sat down after delivering his first speech in opposition, one of the ablest observers in Parliament turned to me and said: "The Prime Minister has crossed the floor of the House." And that exactly expressed the feeling created by that authoritative manner, that masculine voice, that air of high detachment from the mere squalor and tricks of the Parliamentary game. He never seemed greater to the House than in the moment when he had fallen—never more its intellectual master, its most authentic voice, its wisest and most disinterested counsellor.

It is not these men, the Coquelins and the Asquiths, who come sprinting before the curtain after drenching themselves in the limelight on the stage. They hate the limelight and they are indifferent to the applause. The gentry who cultivate the art of "taking the call" are quite another breed. You know the type, both on the stage and off. Take that eminent actor, Bluffington Phelps. He shambles about the stage, his words gurgle in his throat, his eyes roll like a bull's under torture; if he is not throwing agonised glances at the man with the limelight he is straining to catch the voice of the prompter at the flies. But when it comes to "taking the call" there is not his superior on the stage. He monopolises the applause as he monopolises the limelight, and by these artifices he has persuaded the public that he is an actor. It is a glorious joke—

> Hood an ass in reverend purple,
> So that you hide his too ambitious ears,
> And he shall pass for a cathedral doctor.

It is true, as Lincoln said, that you can fool some of the people all the time. Mr. Bluffington Phelps knows that it is true. He knows that there is a large part of the public, possibly the majority of the public, which is born to be fooled, which will believe anything because it hasn't the faculty of judging anything but the size of the crowd and which will always follow the ass with the longest ears and the loudest bray.

It is the same off the stage. The art of politics is the art of "taking the call." Harley knew the trick perfectly. Where anything was to be got, it was said of him, he always knew how to wriggle himself in; when any misfortune threatened he knew how to wriggle himself out. He took the cheers and passed the kicks on to his colleagues. His chivalrous spirit is not dead. It is familiar in every country, but most of all in democratic countries. We all know the type of politician who has the true genius for the limelight. If the newspapers forget him for five minutes he is miserable. "What has happened to the publicity department? Has the fellow in charge of the limelight gone to sleep? Wake him up. Don't let the public forget me. If there's nothing else to tell 'em, tell 'em that my hat is two sizes larger than it was a year ago. Tell 'em about my famous smile. Tell 'em about my dear old grandmother to whom I owe my inimitable piety. Tell 'em I'm at my desk at seven o'clock every morning and never leave it until half-past seven the next morning. Tell 'em anything you like—only tell 'em."

If things go right, and there is applause in the house, he skips in front of the curtain to take the call. "Thank you, gentlemen—*and* ladies. Thank you. Yes, alone I did it. Nobody else in the company had a hand in it—nor a finger. No, not a finger." If anything goes wrong and the audience hiss, does he shirk the ordeal? Not at all. He comes before the curtain with indignant sorrow. "Yes, ladies and gentlemen, I agree with you. Most scandalous failure.

It was all Jones's doing, and Smith's, and Robinson's. I went down on my bended knees to them, but they wouldn't listen to me—wouldn't listen. And now you see what's happened. Hear the anguish in my voice. Look at the tears in my broken-hearted eyes. Oh, the pity of it, ladies and gentlemen—the pity of it. And I tried so hard—I really did. But they wouldn't listen—they wouldn't l-l-listen." (Breaks down in sobs.)

I recall a legend that seems apposite. A certain politician of antiquity—let us call him Eurysthenes—hit on a happy idea for making himself famous. He bought a lot of parrots and taught them to shriek "Great is Eurysthenes!" Then he turned them all out into the woods, and there they sat and squawked "Great is Eurysthenes." And the Athenians, astonished at such unanimity, took up the refrain and cried, "Great is Eurysthenes." And Eurysthenes, who was waiting in the flies, so to speak, took the call and was famous ever after.

A DITHYRAMB ON A DOG

CHUM, roped securely to the cherry tree, is barking at the universe in general and at the cows in the paddock beyond the orchard in particular. Occasionally he pauses to snap at passing bees, of which the orchard is full on this bright May morning; but he soon tires of this diversion and resumes his loud-voiced demand to share in the good things that are going. For the sun is high, the cuckoo is shouting over the valley, and the woods are calling him to unknown adventures. They shall not call in vain. Work shall be suspended and this morning shall be dedicated to his service. For this is the day of deliverance. The word is spoken and the shadow of the sword is lifted. The battle for his biscuit is won.

He does not know what a narrow shave he has had. He does not know that for weeks past he has been under sentence of death as an encumbrance, a luxury that this savage world of men could no longer afford;

that having taken away his bones we were about to take away his biscuits and leave his cheerful companionship a memory of the dream world we lived in before the Great Killing began. All this he does not know. That is one of the numerous advantages of being a dog. He knows nothing of the infamies of men or of the incertitudes of life. He does not look before and after and pine for what is not. He has no yesterday and no to-morrow—only the happy or the unhappy present. He does not, as Whitman says, "lie awake at night thinking of his soul," or lamenting his past or worrying about his future. His bereavements do not disturb him and he doesn't care twopence about his career. He has no debts and hungers for no honours. He would rather have a bone than a baronetcy. He does not turn over old albums, with their pictured records of forgotten holidays and happy scenes, and yearn for the "tender grace of a day that is dead," or wonder whether he will keep his job and what will become of his "poor old family," as Stevenson used to say, if he doesn't, or speculate whether the war will end this year, next year, some time, or never. He doesn't even know there is a war. Think of it! He doesn't know there is a war. O happy dog! Give him a bone, a biscuit, a good word, and a scamper in the woods, and his cup of joy is full. Would that my needs were as few and as easily satisfied.

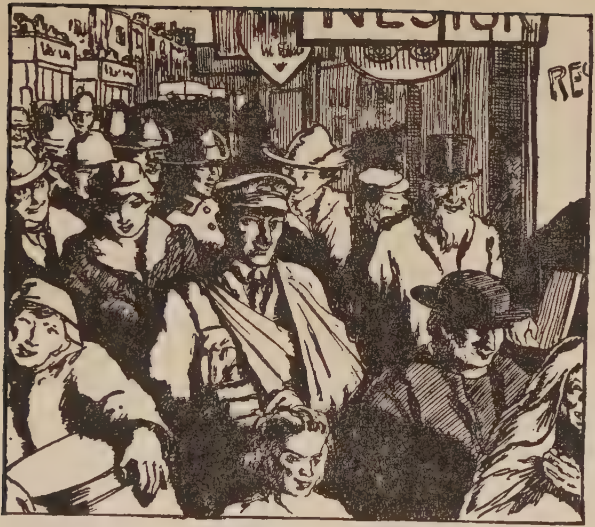
And now his biscuit is safe and I have the rare privilege of rejoicing with Sir Frederick Banbury. I do not know that I should go as far as he seems to go, for in that touching little speech of his at the Cannon Street Hotel he indicated that nothing in the heavens above or in the earth beneath should stand between him and his dogs. "In August 1914," he said, "my son went to France. The night before he left he said, 'Father, look after my dogs and horses while I am away.' I said, 'Don't you worry about them.' He was killed in December, and I have got the horses and dogs now. As I said to Mr. Bonar Law last year, I should like to see the man who would tell me I have not to look after my son's dogs and horses." Well, I suppose that if the choice were between a German victory and a dog biscuit, the dog biscuit would have to go, Sir Frederick. But I rejoice with you that we have not to make the choice. I rejoice that the sentence of death has passed from your dead son's horses and dogs and from that noble creature under the cherry tree.

Look at him, barking now at the cows, now with eloquent appeal at me, and then, having caught my eye, turning sportively to worry the hated rope. He knows that my intentions this morning are honourable. I think he feels that, in spite of appearances, I am in that humour in which at any radiant moment the magic word "Walk" may leap from my lips. What a word that is. No sleep so sound that it will not penetrate its depths and bring him, passionately awake, to his feet. He would sacrifice the whole dictionary for that one electric syllable. That and its brother "Bones." Give him these good, sound, sensible words, and all the fancies of the poets and all the rhetoric of the statesmen may whistle down the winds. He has no use for them. "Walk" and "Bones"—that is the speech a fellow can understand.

Yes, Chum knows very well that I am thinking about him and thinking about him in an uncommonly friendly way. That is the secret of the strange intimacy between us. We may love other animals, and other animals may respond to our affection. But the dog is the only animal who has a reciprocal intelligence. As Coleridge says, he is the only animal that *looks upward* to man, strains to catch his meanings, hungers for his approval. Stroke a cat or a horse, and it will have a physical pleasure; but pat Chum and call him "Good dog!" and he has a spiritual pleasure. He feels good. He is pleased because you are pleased. His tail, his eyebrows, every part of him, proclaim that "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world," and that he himself is on the side of the angels.

And just as he has the sense of virtue, so also he has the sense of sin. A cat may be taught not to do certain things, but if it is caught out and flees, it flees not from shame, but from fear. But the shame of a dog touches an abyss of misery as bottomless as any human emotion. He has fallen out of the state of grace, and nothing but the absolution and remission of his sin will restore him to happiness. By his association with man he seems to have caught something of his capacity for spiritual misery. I had an Airedale once who had moods of despondency as abysmal as my own. He was as sentimental as any minor poet, and at the sound of certain tunes on the piano he would break into paroxysms of grief, whining and moaning as if in one moment of concentrated anguish he recalled every bereavement he had endured, every bone he had lost, every stone heaved at him by his hated enemy, the butcher's boy. Indeed, there are times when the dog approximates so close to our intelligence that he seems to be of us, a sort of humble relation of ourselves, with our elementary feelings but not our gift of expression, our joy but not our laughter, our misery but not our tears, our thoughts but not our speech. To sentence him to death would be almost like homicide, and the day of his reprieve should be celebrated as a festival. . . .

Come, old friend. Let us away to the woods. "Walk."



ON HAPPY FACES IN THE STRAND

I WAS walking along the Strand a few afternoons ago and had a singuar impression of a cheerful world. The Strand is to me always the most attractive street I know, especially on bright afternoons when the sun is drooping behind the Admiralty Arch and its light glints and dances in the eyes of the crowd moving westward. Then it is that I seem to see the wayfarers transfigured into a procession hurrying in pursuit of some sunlit adventure of the soul, and am almost persuaded to turn round and catch with them the flash of vision that gleams in their eyes. But the thing that struck me this afternoon was the unusual gaiety of the people. It seemed to me that I had never seen such a procession of laughing, happy faces. Probably it was due to the fact that it was about the time when the afternoon theatres were emptying. Probably also the impression on my mind was all the sharper because it was a day of depressing tidings—bad news from Russia, from Italy, from everywhere. I did not suppose that these merry people were ignorant of the news or indifferent to it. They were simply obeying the impulse of healthy minds and good digestions to be cheerful—*quand même.*

And as I passed along I wondered whether, in spite of all the tragedy in which our life is cast, our fund of personal happiness is undiminished. Do we come into the world with a certain capacity for pleasure and pain and realise it no matter what our external circumstances may be? Johnson took that view and expressed it in the familiar lines incorporated in Goldsmith's "Traveller"—the only lines of Johnson's very pedestrian poetry which have won a sort of immortality:

> How small of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which kings or laws can cause or cure.
> Still to ourselves in every place consigned
> Our own felicity we make or find.

In its political intention I have always disagreed with this verse. Johnson was a Tory who loved liberty in its social meanings, but distrusted it as a political ideal and hated all agitation for reform. And because he hated reform he said that our happiness had no relation to the conditions in which we live.

It is an argument which must be a great comfort to the slum-owner, the slave-owner, the profiteer, and all the odious people who live by exploiting others. And like most falsities there is a sense in which it is true. The child playing in a sunless court laughs as gaily and probably experiences as much animal happiness—assuming it is sufficiently fed and sufficiently warm—as the boy in the Eton playing fields. It is a mercy it is so. It is a mercy that we have this reservoir of defiant happiness within that answers the harsh and bitter blows of outward circumstance. But he who advances this fact as a political argument is not a wise man. Is the quality of happiness nothing? Is it nothing to us whether we find our happiness over a pint pot, or in the love of gardens, the beauties of the world and the infinite fields of the mind's adventures? Is it nothing to society? We have learned that even the pig is better for a clean sty.

But putting aside the quality of happiness and its social aspects, there is much truth in Johnson's lines. Happiness is an entirely personal affair. We have it in large measure or in small, but in so far as we have it it is wholly and completely ours and not the sport of fortune. I do not say that if you put me in a dungeon it will not lessen the sum of my happiness, for personal freedom is the soul of happiness. If you are a sensitive person the sorrows of the world will afflict you, but they will afflict you as a personal thing, and it may be doubted whether their magnitude will add to the affliction. I hope it is not a shocking thing to say, but I sometimes doubt, looking on the world as it appears to me and putting aside the infinity of sheer physical suffering, whether the sum of personal happiness is less to-day than in normal times.

I was talking the other day to a well-known author, who expressed satisfaction that he had had the good fortune to live in the most "interesting" period of the world's history. There was an indignant protest against the word from another member of the company; but the author insisted. Yes, interesting. Could not tragedy be interesting as well as comedy? Could not one feel all the horror and misery and insanity of this frightful upheaval, shoulder one's tasks, take one's part in the battle, and still preserve in the quiet chambers of the mind a detached and philosophic contemplation of the drama and pronounce it—yes, interesting? His own record of unselfish service during the war, and his passionate desire for a sane and ordered world were too unquestionable for his meaning to be misunderstood.

And the idea he wished to convey was sound enough. There has never been an event on the earth which has so absorbed the thought, the energies, and the faculties of men as the catastrophe through which we are living. It overshadows every moment of our lives, colours everything that we do, roots up our habits, cuts down our food, breaks up our homes, scatters the dead like leaves over the plains of Europe, and sows the seas with the wreckage of a thousand ships. I can fancy that when our great-grandchildren in 2017 look back upon the days of their forefathers they will picture us cowering like sheep before the tempest, with no thought except of the gigantic cataclysm that has overtaken us. In a sense they will be right. In another sense they will be wrong. We are living through a nightmare, but we laugh in our dreams. The vastness of the general calamity might be expected to plunge us individually in despair. But it doesn't. Individually we seem to preserve a defiant cheerfulness, snatch our pleasures with a sharpened appetite, can even find a fascination in the wild sky and the lightnings that stab the tortured earth.

As I look up I see the buses passing and read the announcements on the knife-boards. You might, reading them, suppose that we were living in the most light-hearted of worlds. There is "A Little Bit of Fluff" at one theatre, "High Jinks" at another, "Monty's Flapper" here, the "Bing Girls" there, and someone called Shirley Kellogg invites me to "Zig-Zag." These, my dear child of A.D. 2017, are the things with which England amused itself in the time of the tempest. And do not forget also that it was during the great war that Charlie Chaplin swept the two hemispheres with the magic of his incomparable idiocy. Perhaps without the great war he could not have achieved such unparalleled renown. For this levity is largely a counterpoise to our anxieties—a violent reaction against events, an attempt to keep the balance of things even. The strain on us is so heavy that we tend to go a little wildly in extremes, as the ship sailing through heavy seas plunges into the trough of the waves and then soars skyward but preserves its equilibrium throughout.

We are seen both at our best and our worst—stripped naked as it were to the soul, our disguises gone, our real selves revealed to ourselves and to our neighbours, and with equal surprise to both. Our nerve ends are bare, and our reactions to circumstance are violent and irrational. We are at once more generous and more bitter. We are the sport even of the weather. If we see the silver lining of our spiritual cloud more brilliantly when the sun laughs in our faces, our depression touches a more abysmal note when the east wind blows and we flounder in the slush of our winter nights. I could not help associating with the procession of happy faces in the Strand another widely different incident that I witnessed in a bus the other night. It seemed the reverse side of the same shield. A respectably dressed, middle-aged pair came in out of the darkness and the sleet. They were both rather large, and there was not much room, but they squeezed themselves into two vacant places with an air of silent resolution which indicated that they would stand no nonsense, knew how to demand their "rights" and had no civility to waste on anybody. You know the sort of people. If you don't get out of their way in double quick time they simply sit down on you. They do not say "Is there room?" or "Can you make room?" That would be a sign of weakness, an act of politeness, and they abominate politeness except in other people. They expect it in other people.

"Where are you going to?" asked the woman when they were seated.

"Victoria," said the man with a snap.

"Well you needn't bite my head off," said the woman.

"I've told you six times," snapped the man.

"What a bully you are," retorted the woman. Then they subsided into silence. Husband and wife, I thought—bursting with bad temper to such an extent that they boil over even in a bus full of people. Probably they have been snarling like that ever since their honeymoon, and will go on snarling until one puts on crape for the other.

But on second thoughts I concluded that this was probably unjust. They had come in out of the slush and the blackness, and had got the gloom of the London night in their souls. Most of us get it in our souls more or less. It makes us ill-humoured and depressed. In the early days there was a certain novelty in the darkened streets, and some ecstatic writers discovered that London had never been so beautiful before. They even wrote poems about it. When you blundered into a pillar-box and began making profuse apologies, or stumbled against the kerb-stone, or fell into the arms of some invisible but substantial part of the darkness, or scurried frantically across Trafalgar Square, you felt that it was all part of the great adventure of war and was in its way rather romantic and exhilarating. But three winters of that experience have exhausted our enthusiasm and have made London at night a mere debauch of depression except for those who make it a debauch of another kind.

But whatever the explanation of that little scene in the bus, there is no doubt that as the long strain goes on it plays havoc with our nerves and our tempers. We are tired and angry with this mad world, and since we cannot visit our anger on the enemy we visit it very unreasonably on each other. The shattered vase of life lies in ruins at our feet, and there is an overmastering temptation to grind the fragments to dust rather than piece them together for the healing future to restore. We have lost faith in men, in principles, in ideals, in ourselves, and are subdued to the naked barbarism into which civilisation has collapsed. Religion was never at so low an ebb, so openly repudiated, or, what is worse, so travestied by charlatans and blackguards. I heard the other day the description of an address at a public gathering by a person who mixed up his blasphemies about some new god of the creature's imagining with obscenities that would be impossible on a music hall stage.

In the Divorce Court last week the counsel for the lady in the case gravely advanced the plea that in these days, when men are dying by the million in mud and filth, the women at home must not be denied their excitements, their flirtations and their late suppers. When Mars is abroad Venus must be abroad too. Murder is the sole business of the world and lust is its proper pastime. Take a glance at any bookstall and note the garbage which lines its shelves. Dip into the morass of the popular Sunday newspapers with their millions of circulation and see the

broth of foulness in which the great public take their weekly intellectual bath. The tide has overwhelmed the Stage as it has overwhelmed the Church, and a wild levity companions our illimitable tragedy.

It is no new phenomenon. In time of peril humanity always reveals these extravagant contrasts, and Boccaccio, with the true instinct of the artist, set his tales of merriment and licentiousness against the background of a city perishing of plague. We live at once more intensely and more frivolously. The pendulum of our emotions swings violently from extreme to extreme and a defiant exhilaration answers the mood of depression and anxiety. I can conceive that that couple in the bus were quite merry when they saw the sun shine in the morning and read that Vimy Ridge had been won. There is, in Pepys' Diary, a delightful illustration of the swift transitions by which the mind in times of stress seeks to keep its equipoise. It is the 10th Sept. (Lord's Day), 1665: The plague is at its worst and the whole city seems doomed. The war with the Dutch is going badly. Mrs. Pepys' father is dying, and everything looks black. But there comes news of a success at sea and Pepys goes down the river to meet Lord Brouncker and Sir J. Minnes at Greenwich—

> "Where we supped [there was also Sir W. Doyly and Mr. Evelyn]; but the receipt of this news did put us all into such an extasy of joy that it inspired into Sir J. Minnes and Mr. Evelyn such a spirit of mirth that in all my life I never met so merry a two hours as our company this night. Among other humours, Mr. Evelyn's repeating of some verses made up of nothing but the various acceptations of *may* and *can,* and doing it so aptly upon occasion of something of that nature, and so fast, did make us all die almost with laughing, and did so stop the mouth of Sir J. Minnes in the middle of all his mirth that I never saw any man so out-done in all my life; and Sir J. Minnes's mirth to see himself out-done was the crown of all our mirth."

Isn't that a wonderful picture? And think of the grave John Evelyn having this gaiety in him! You will read the whole of his Diary and not get one smile from his severe countenance. I had the curiosity to turn to his own record of the same time. He has no entry for the 10th, but two days before he says:

> "Came home, there perishing neere 10,000 poor creatures weekly; however I went all along the City and suburbs from Kent Streete to St. James's, a dismal passage, and

dangerous to see so many coffins expos'd in the streetes, now thin of people; the shops shut up and all in mourneful silence, as not knowing whose turn might be next."

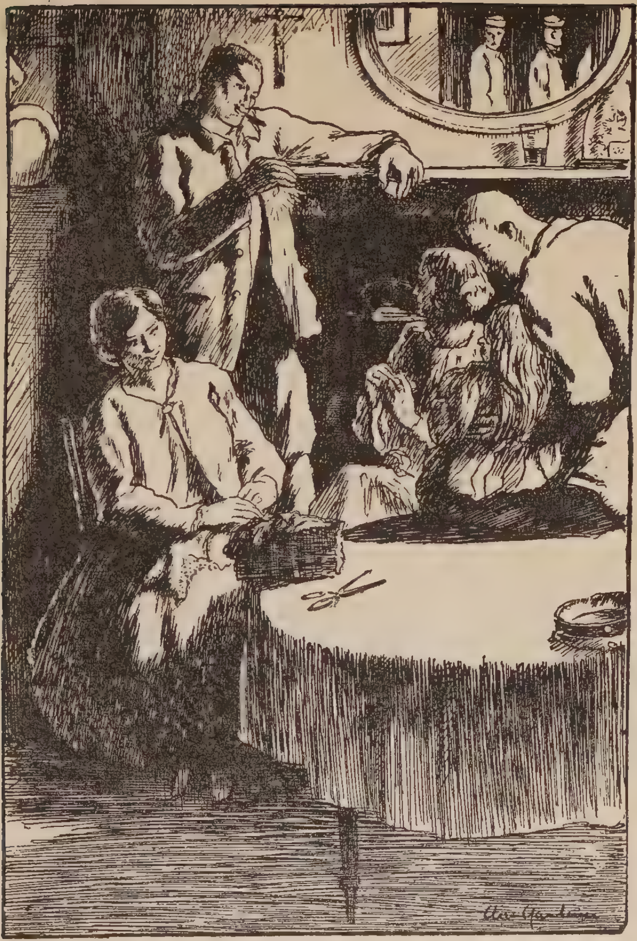
And then, at the receipt of a bit of good news this austere man is seized with "such an extasy of joy" that he gives Pepys the merriest evening of his life. And Pepys was a good judge of merry evenings.

The truth is expressed somewhere in Hardy's works, where he says that the soul's specific gravity is always less than that of the sea of circumstances into which it is cast and rises unfailingly to the surface. There comes to my mind as illustrating this truth a passage in that great and moving book "Under Fire"—the most tremendous picture of the horror and squalor of war ever painted by man. One of the squad of French soldiers with whom the book deals is in the trenches near Souchez and the Vimy Ridge. It is before the English had taken over that part of the line. There is a quiet time and some of the men get on companionable terms with the enemy. This man's wife and child are in Lens, just behind the German lines. He has not seen them for eighteen months, and out of sheer good nature the German soldiers lend him a uniform and smuggle him into a coal fatigue which is going into Lens. He passes in the disguise among his enemy companions by his own house and sees through the open door his wife and the widow of a comrade sitting at their work. In the room with them are two German non-commissioned officers, and his child is on the knee of one of them.

But the thing that strikes him to the heart is the fact that his wife is smiling as she talks to the non-coms.—"Not a forced smile, not a debtor's smile, *non,* a real smile that came from *her,* that she gave." He did not doubt her affection or her loyalty, and when the bitterness had passed and he was back in his lines and telling his comrade of the adventure, he defended her from the criticism of his own mind in words of extraordinary beauty:

> "She's quite young, you know; she's twenty-six. She can't hold her youth in, it's coming out of her all over, and when she's resting in the lamplight and the warmth, she's got to smile; and even if she burst out laughing, it would just simply be her youth singing in her throat. It isn't on account of others, if truth were told; it's on account of herself. It's life. She lives. Ah, yes, she lives and that's all. It isn't her fault if she lives. You wouldn't have her die? Very well, what do you want her to do? Cry all day on account of me and the Boches? Grouse? One can't cry all the time, nor grouse for eighteen months. Can't be done. It's too long, I tell you. That's all there is to it."

In that poignant story we touch the root of the matter. We live. And, living, the light and shadow of life play across the surface of ourselves, though deep down in our hearts there is the sense of the unspeakable tragedy of things. We may wonder that we can be happy and may be rather ashamed of it, but "we live" and we cannot deny our natures. We may, like Miss Havisham, draw down the blinds, shut out the world, and dwell in darkness, but then we cease to live and become mad. We must laugh if



"*A real smile. . . .*"

only to keep our sanity, and nature arranges that we shall laugh even in the face of terrible things. There was a good deal of truth in the remark of the French lady to Boswell that "Our happiness depends on the circulation of the blood." The wild current of affairs sweeps us on whithersoever it will, but in our separate little eddies we whirl around and find relief in private distractions and pleasures that seem independent of the great march of events. Jane Austen wrote her novels in the midst of the Napoleonic wars, yet I cannot recall one hint in them of that world-shaking event. She mentioned a battle in one of her letters, but even then only a little callously. And a friend of mine told me the other day that he had had the curiosity to turn up the newspaper files of the time of Austerlitz and found that the public were apparently all agog, not about the battle that had changed the current of the world, but about the merits of the Infant Roscius. It is well that we have this faculty of detachment and independent life. If there were no private relief for this public tragedy the world would have gone mad. But perhaps you will say it has gone mad. . . .

Let me recall by way of *envoi* that fine story in Montaigne. When the town of Nola was destroyed by the barbarians Paulinus, the bishop, was stripped of all he possessed and taken prisoner. And as he was led away he prayed, "O Lord, make me to bear this loss, for Thou knowest that they have taken nothing that is mine: the riches that made me rich and the treasures that made me worthy are still mine in their fullness."

ON WORD-MAGIC

I SEE that a discussion has arisen in the *Spectator* on the "Canadian Boat Song." It appeared in *Blackwood's* nearly a century ago, and ever since its authorship has been the subject of recurrent controversy. The author may have been "Christopher North," or his brother, Tom Wilson, or Galt, or the Ettrick Shepherd, or the Earl of Eglinton, or none of these. We shall never know. It is one of those pleasant mysteries of the past, like the authorship of the Junius Letters (if, indeed, that can be called a mystery), which can never be exhausted because they can never be solved. I am not going to offer an opinion; for I have none, and I refer to the subject only to illustrate the magic of a word. The poem lives by virtue of the famous stanza:—

From the lone shieling of the misty island
  Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas—
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
  And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

It would be an insensible heart that did not feel the surge of this strong music. The yearning of the exile for the motherland has never been uttered with more poignant beauty, though Stevenson came near the same note of tender anguish in the lines written in far Samoa and ending:—

Be it granted me to behold you again, in dying,
  Hills of home, and to hear again the call,
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees crying—
  And hear no more at all.

But for energy and masculine emotion the unknown author takes the palm. The verse is like a great wave of the sea, rolling in to the mother shore, gathering impetus and grandeur as it goes, culminating in the note of vision and scattering itself triumphantly in the splendour of that word "Hebrides."

It is a beautiful illustration of the magic of a word used in its perfect setting. It gathers up the emotion of the theme into one chord of fulfilment and flings open the casement of the mind to far horizons. It is not the only instance in which the name has been used with extraordinary effect. Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper" has many beautiful lines, but the peculiar glory of the poem dwells in the couplet in which, searching for parallels for the song of the Highland girl that fills "the vale profound," he hears in imagination the cuckoo's call

Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Wordsworth, like Homer and Milton, and all who touch the sublime in poetry, had the power of transmuting a proper name to a strange and significant beauty. The most memorable example, perhaps, is in the closing lines of the poem to Dorothy Wordsworth:—

But an old age serene and bright,
And lovely as a Lapland night,
Shall lead thee to thy grave.

"Lapland" is an intrinsically beautiful word, but it is its setting in this case that makes it shine, pure and austere, like a star in the heavens of poetry. And the miraculous word need not be intrinsically beautiful. Darien is not, yet it is that word in which perhaps the greatest of all sonnets finds its breathless, astonished close:—

Silent—upon a peak—in Dar—ien.

And the truth is that the magic of words is not in the words themselves, but in the distinction, delicacy, surprise of their use. Take the great line which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Antony—

I am dying, Egypt, dying.

It is the only occasion in the play which he makes Antony speak of Cleopatra by her territorial name and there is no warrant for the usage of Plutarch. It is a stroke of sheer word magic. It summons up with a sudden magnificence all the mystery and splendour incarnated in the woman for whom he has gambled away the world and all the earthly glories that are fading into the darkness of death. The whole tragedy seems to flame to its culmination in this word that suddenly lifts the action from the human plane to the scale of cosmic drama.

Words of course have an individuality, a perfume of their own, but just as the flame in the heart of the diamond has to be revealed by the craftsman, so the true magic of a beautiful word only discloses itself at the touch of the master. "Quiet" is an ordinary enough word, and few are more frequently on our lips. Yet what wonderful effects Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats extract from it:—

> It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;
> The holy time is quiet as a nun,
> Breathless with adoration.

The whole passage is a symphony of the sunset, but it is that ordinary word "quiet" which breathes like a benediction through the cadence, filling the mind with the sense of an illimitable peace. And so with Coleridge's "singeth a quiet tune," or Keats':—

> Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing.

Or when, "half in love with easeful Death," he

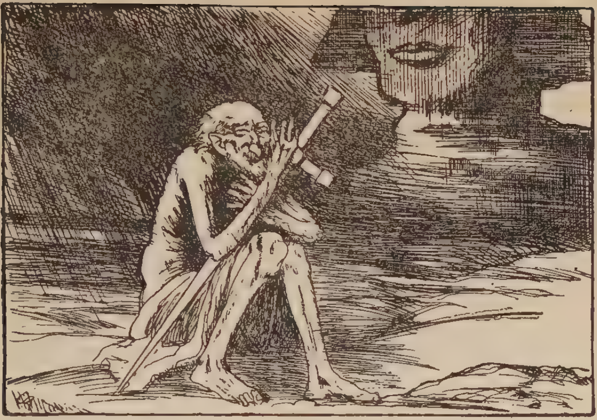
> Called him soft names in many a musèd rhyme
> To take into the air my quiet breath.

And again:—

> Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star
> Sat grey-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone.

There have been greater poets than Keats, but none who has had so sure an instinct for the precious word as he had. Byron had none of this magician touch, Shelley got his effects by the glow and fervour of his spirit; Swinburne by the sheer torrent of his song, and Browning by the energy of his thought. Tennyson was much more of the artificer in words than these, but he had not the secret of the word-magic of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, or Keats. Compare the use of adjectives in two things like Shelley's "Ode to the Skylark" and Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale," and the difference is startling. Both are incomparable, but in the one case it is the hurry of the song, the flood of rapture that delights us: in the other each separate line holds us with its jewelled word. *"Embalméd* darkness." *"Verdurous* glooms." "Now more than ever seems it *rich* to die." "Cooled a long age in the *deep-delvèd* earth." *"Darkling* I listen." "She stood in tears amid the *alien* corn." "Oh, for a beaker full of the *warm south."* "With beaded bubbles *winking* at the brim." "No *hungry* generations tread thee down." And so on. Such a casket of jewels can be found in no other poet that has used our tongue. If Keats' vocabulary had a defect it was a certain over-ripeness, a languorous beauty that, like the touch of his hand, spoke of death. It lacked the fresh, happy, sunlit spirit of Shakespeare's sovran word.

Word-magic belongs to poetry. In prose it is an intrusion. That was the view of Coleridge. It was because, among its other qualities, Southey's writing was so free from the shock of the dazzling word that Coleridge held it to be the perfect example of pure prose. The modulations are so just, the note so unaffected, the current so clear and untroubled that you read on without pausing once to think "What a brilliant writer this fellow is." And that is the true triumph of the art. It is an art which addresses itself to the mind, and not the emotions, and word-magic does not belong to its true armoury.



ODIN GROWN OLD

I HAD a strange dream last night. Like most dreams, it was a sort of wild comment on the thought that had possessed me in my waking hours. We had been talking of the darkness of these times, how we walked from day to day into a future that stalked before us like a wall of impenetrable night that we could almost touch and yet never could overtake, how all the prophets (including ourselves) had been found out, and how all the prophecies of the wise proved to be as worthless as the guesses of the foolish. Ah, if we could only get behind this grim mask of the present and see the future stretching before us ten years, twenty years, fifty years hence, what would we give? What a strange, ironic light would be shed upon this writhing, surging, blood-stained Europe. With what a shock we should discover the meaning of the terror.

But the Moving Finger writes on with inscrutable secrecy. We cannot wipe out a syllable that it has written; we cannot tell a syllable that it will write. . . .

You deserved bad dreams, you will say, if you talked like this. . . .

When I awoke (in my sleep) I seemed like some strange reminiscence of myself, like an echo that had gone on reverberating down countless centuries. It was as if I had lived from the beginning of Time, and now stood far beyond the confines of Time. I was alone in the world. I forded rivers and climbed mountains and traversed endless plains; I came upon the ruins of vast cities, great embankments that seemed once to have been railways, fragments of arches that had once sustained great bridges, dockyards where the skeletons of mighty ships lay rotting in garments of seaweed and slime. I seemed, with the magic of dreams, to see the whole earth stretched out before me like a map. I traced the course of the coast lines, saw how strangely altered they were, and with invisible power passed breathlessly from continent to continent, from desolation to desolation. Again and again I cried out in the agony of an unspeakable loneliness, but my cry only startled a solitude that was infinite. Time seemed to have no meaning in this appalling vacancy. I did not live hours or days, but centuries, æons, eternities. Only on the mountains and in the deserts did I see anything that recalled the world I had known in the immeasurable backward of time. Standing on the snowy ridge of the Finsteraarjoch I saw the pink of the dawn still flushing the summits of the Southern Alps, and in the desert I came upon the Pyramids and the Sphinx.

And it was by the Sphinx that I saw The Man. He seemed stricken with unthinkable years. His gums were toothless, his eyes bleared, his figure shrunken to a pitiful tenuity. He sat at the foot of the Sphinx, fondling a sword, and as he fondled it he mumbled to himself in an infantile treble. As I approached he peered at me through his dim eyes, and to my question as to who he was he replied in thin, queasy voice:

"I am Odin—hee! hee! I possess the earth, the whole earth . . . I and my sword . . . we own it all . . . we and the Sphinx . . . we own it all. . . . All . . . hee! hee! . . ." And he turned and began to fondle his sword again.

"But where are the others? What happened to them?"

"Gone . . . hee! hee! . . . All gone. . . . It took thousands of years to do it, but they've all gone. It never would have been done if man hadn't become civilised. For centuries and centuries men tried to kill themselves off with bows and arrows, and spears and catapults, but they couldn't do it. Then they invented gunpowder, but that was no better. The victory really began when man became civilised and discovered modern science. He learned to fly in the air and sail under water, and move mountains and make lightnings, and turn the iron of the hills into great ships and the coal beneath the earth into incredible forms of heat and power. And all the time he went on saying what a good world he was making . . . hee! hee! Such a wonderful Machine. . . . Such a peaceful Machine

. . . hee! hee! . . . Age of Reason, he said. . . . Age of universal peace and brotherhood setting in, he said. . . . Hee! hee! . . . We have been seeking God for thousands of years, he said, and now we have found Him. We have made Him ourselves—out of our own heads. We got tired of looking for Him in the soul. Now we have found Him in the laboratory. We have made Him out of all the energies of the earth. Great is our God of the Machine. Honour, blessing, glory, power—power over things. Power! Power! Power!"

His voice rose to a senile shriek.

"And all the time . . . hee, hee! . . . all the time he was making the Machine for me—me, Odin, me and my servants, the despots, the kings, the tyrants, the dictators, the enemies of men. I laughed . . . hee, hee! . . . I laughed as I saw his Machine growing vaster and vaster for the day of his doom, growing beyond his own comprehension, making him more and more the slave of itself, the fly on its gigantic wheel. What a willing servant is this Power we have made, he said. What a friend of Man. How wonderful we are to have created this Machine of Benevolence. . . .

"And it was mine . . . hee, hee! . . . Mine. And when it was complete I handed it over to my servants. And the Machine of Benevolence became the Monster of Destruction. First one tyrant seized it and fell; then another and he fell. This white race got the Machine for a season, then another white race got it; then the yellow race. And they all perished . . . hee, hee! . . . They all perished. . . . And with every victory the Machine grew more deadly. All the gifts of the earth and all the labour of men went to feed its mighty hunger. It devoured its creators by thousands, by millions, by nations. It slew, it poisoned, it burned, it starved. The whole earth became a desolation. . . .

"And now I own it all . . . hee, hee! . . . I and my sword. We own it all. . . . We and the Sphinx." His voice, which had grown strong with excitement, sank back to its infantile treble.

"And what was the meaning of it all?" I asked. "And what will you do with your victory?"

"The meaning . . . the meaning . . . I don't know. . . . I've come to ask the Sphinx. I've sat here waiting for years, centuries . . . oh, so long. But she says nothing—only looks out over the desert with that terrible calm, as though she knew the riddle but would never tell it. . . . Sometimes I think she is going to speak. . . . Look . . . look now. . . . Aren't her lips . . ."

His thin voice rose to a tremulous cry. The sword shook in his palsied hands. His rheumy eyes looked up at the image with a senile frenzy.

I looked up, too. . . . Yes, surely the lips were moving. They were about to open. I should hear at last the reading of the enigma of the strange beings who made a God that slew them. . . . The lips were open now . . . there was a rattling in the throat. . . .

But as I waited for the words that were struggling into utterance there came a sudden wind, hot and blinding and thick with the dust of the desert. It blotted out the sun and darkened the vision of things. The Sphinx vanished in the swirling folds of the storm, the figure of the man faded into the general gloom, and I was left alone in the midst of nothingness. . . .

ON A SMILE IN A SHAVING GLASS

As I looked into the shaving glass in the privacy of the bathroom this morning, I noticed that there was a very pronounced smile on my face. I was surprised. Not that I am a smileless person in ordinary: on the contrary, I fancy I have an average measure of mirthfulness—a little patchy perhaps, but enough in quantity if unequal in distribution. But I have not been hilarious for a week past. There is not much to be hilarious about in these anxious days when the tide of war is sweeping back over the hills and valleys of the Somme and every hour comes burdened with dark tidings. I find the light-hearted person a trial, and gaiety an offence, like a foolish snigger breaking in on the mad agony of Lear.

Why, then, this smiling face in the glass? Only last night, coming up on the top of the late bus, I was irritated by the good humour of a fat man who came and sat in front of me. He looked up at the brilliant moonlit sky and round at the passengers, and then began humming to himself as though he was full of good news and cheerfulness. When he was tired of humming he began whistling, and his whistling was more intolerable than his humming, for it was noisier. Hang the fellow, thought I, what is he humming and whistling about? This moon that is touching the London streets with beauty—what scenes of horror and carnage it looks down on only a few score smiles away! What nameless heroisms are being done for us as we sit under the quiet stars in security and ease! What mighty issues are in the balance. . . . And this fellow hums and whistles as though he had had no end of a good day. Perhaps he is a profiteer. Anyhow, I was relieved when he went down the stairs, and his vacuous whistling died on the air. . . . Yet this face in the glass looked as though it could hum or whistle quite as readily as that fat man whom I judged so harshly last night.

It was certainly not the sunny morning that was responsible. The beauty of these wonderful days would, in ordinary circumstances, charge my spirits to the brim, but now I wake to them with a feeling of resentment. They are like a satire on our tragedy—like marriage garments robing the skeleton of death. Moreover, they are a practical as well as a spiritual grievance. They are the ally of the enemy. They have come when he needed them, just as they deserted us last autumn when we needed them, and when day after day our gallant men floundered to the attack in Flanders through seas of mud. No, most Imperial Sun, I cannot welcome you. I would you would hide your face from the tortured earth, and leave the rough elements to deal out even justice between the disputants in this great argument. . . . No, this smile cannot be for you. And it is not wholly a tribute to the letter that has just come from that stalwart boy of nineteen, boy of the honest, open face and the frequent, hearty laugh, stopped on the eve of his first leave and plunged into this hell of death. Dated Saturday. All well up to Saturday. The first two terrible days survived. Those who love him can breathe more freely.

But though that was perhaps the foundation, it did not explain the smile. Ah, I had got it. It was that paragraph I had read in the newspaper recording the Kaiser's message to his wife on the victory of his armies, and concluding its flamboyant braying with the familiar blasphemy, "God is with us." I find that when I am cheerless a message from the Kaiser always provides a tonic, and that his patronage of the Almighty gives me confidence. This crude, humourless vanity cannot be destined to win the world. It cannot be that humanity is to suffer so grotesque a jest as to fall under the heel of this inflated buffoon and of the system of which he is the symbol. I know that other warriors have claimed the Almighty and have justified the claim—have won even in virtue of the claim. Mohammedanism swept the Christian world before it to the cry of "Allah-il-Allah," and to Cromwell the presence of the Lord of Hosts at his side was as real as the presence of Jehovah was to the warriors of Israel. Stonewall Jackson was all the more terrible for the grim, fanatical faith that burned in him from the days of his conversion in Mexico, and, though Lincoln had no orthodox creed, the sense of divine purpose was always present to him, and no one used the name of the Almighty in great moments with more sincere and impressive beauty.

You have only to turn to Lincoln or Cromwell to feel the vast gulf between their piety and this vulgar impiety. And the reason is simple. They believed in the spiritual governance of human life. Cromwell may have been mistaken in his conception of God, but it was a God of the spirit whom he served and whose unworthy instrument he was in achieving the spiritual redemption of men. The material victory was nothing to him except as a means of accomplishing the emancipation of the soul of man, of which political liberty was only the elementary expression. But the Kaiser's conception of God is a denial of everything that is spiritual and humane. He talks of his God as if he were a brigand chief, or an image of blood and iron wrought in his own likeness, a family deity, a sort of sleeping partner of the firm of Hohenzollern, to be left snoring when villainy is afoot and nudged into wakefulness to adorn a triumph. It is the negation of the God of the spirit. It is the God of brute force, of violence and terror, tramping on the garden of the soul in man. It is the God of materialism at war with all that is spiritual. In a word, this thing that the Kaiser calls God is not God at all. It is the Devil.

On this question of the partisanship of the Almighty in regard to our human quarrels, the best attitude is silence. Lincoln, with his unfailing wisdom, set the subject in its right relationship when a lady asked him for the assurance that God was on their side.

"The important thing," he said, "is not whether God is on our side, but whether we are on the side of God." This attitude will save us from blasphemous arrogance and from a good deal of perplexity. For when we claim that God is our champion and is fighting exclusively for us we get into difficulties. We have only finite tests to apply to an infinite purpose and by those tests neither the loyalty nor the omnipotence of the Almighty will be sustained. And what will you do then? Will you, when things go wrong, ask with the poet,

"Is he deaf and blind, our God? . . . Is he indeed at all?"

The Greeks got out of the dilemma by having many deities who took the most intimate share in human quarrels, but adopted opposite sides. They could do much for their earthly clients, but their efforts were neutralised by the power of the gods briefed on the other side. Vulcan could forge an impenetrable shield for Achilles, and Juno could warn him, through the mouth of his horse Xanthus, of his approaching doom, but neither could save him. This guess at the spiritual world supplied a crude working explanation of the queer contrariness of things on the human plane, but it left the gods pale and ineffectual shadows of the mind.

We have lost this ingenuous explanation of the strange drama of our life. We do not know what powers encompass us about, or in what vast rhythm the tumultuous surges and wild discords of our being are engulfed. No voice comes from the void and no portents are in the sky. The stars are infinitely aloof and the face of nature offers us neither comfort nor revelation. But within us we feel the impulse of the human spirit, seeking the free air, turning to the light of beautiful and reasonable things as the flower turns to the face of the sun. And in that impulse we find the echo to whatever far-off, divine strain we move. We cannot doubt its validity. It is the authentic, indestructible note of humanity. We may falter in the measure, stumble in our steps, get bewildered admidst the complexity of intractible and unintelligible things. But the spiritual movement goes on, like the Pilgrim's Chorus fighting its way through the torrent of the world. It may be submerged to-day, to-morrow, for generations; but in the end it wins—in the end the moral law prevails over the law of the jungle. The stream of tendency has many turnings, but it makes for righteousness and saps ceaselessly the foundations of the god of violence. It is to that god of harsh, material things that the Kaiser appeals against the eternal strivings of man towards the divine prerogative of freedom. Like the false prophets of old he leaps on his altar, gashes himself with knives till the blood pours out and cries, "Oh, Baal, hear us." And it is because Baal is an idol of wood and stone in a world subject to the governance of the spirit that, even in the darkest hour of the war, we need not lose faith.

That, I think, is the meaning of the smile I caught in the shaving glass this morning.

ON THE RULE OF THE ROAD

THAT was a jolly story which Mr. Arthur Ransome told the other day in one of his messages from Petrograd. A stout old lady was walking with her basket down the middle of a street in Petrograd to the great confusion of the traffic and with no small peril to herself. It was pointed out to her that the pavement was the place for foot-passengers, but she replied: "I'm going to walk where I like. We've got liberty now." It did not occur to the dear old lady that if liberty entitled the foot-passenger to walk down the middle of the road it also entitled the cab-driver to drive on the pavement, and that the end of such liberty would be universal chaos. Everybody would be getting in everybody else's way and nobody would get anywhere. Individual liberty would have become social anarchy.

There is a danger of the world getting liberty-drunk in these days like the old lady with the basket, and it is just as well to remind ourselves of what the rule of the road means. It means that in order that the liberties of all may be preserved the liberties of everybody must be curtailed. When the policeman, say, at Piccadilly Circus steps into the middle of the road and puts out his hand, he is the symbol not of tyranny, but of liberty. You may not think so. You may, being in a hurry and seeing your motor-car pulled up by this insolence of office, feel that your liberty has been outraged. How dare this fellow interfere with your free use of the public highway? Then, if you are a reasonable person, you will reflect that if he did not, incidentally, interfere with you he would interfere with no one, and the result would be that Piccadilly Circus would be a maelstrom that you would never cross at all. You have submitted to a curtailment of private liberty in order that you may enjoy a social order which makes your liberty a reality.

Liberty is not a personal affair only, but a social contract. It is an accommodation of interests. In matters which do not touch anybody else's liberty, of course, I may be as free as I like. If I choose to go down the Strand in a dressing-gown, with long hair and bare feet, who shall say me nay? You have liberty to laugh at me, but I have liberty to be indifferent to you. And if I have a fancy for dyeing my hair, or waxing my moustache (which heaven forbid), or wearing a tall hat, a frock-coat and sandals, or going to bed late or getting up early, I shall follow my fancy and ask no man's permission. I shall not inquire of you whether I may eat mustard with my mutton. I may like mustard with my mutton. And you will not ask me whether you may be a Protestant or a Catholic, whether you may marry the dark lady or the fair lady, whether you may prefer Ella Wheeler Wilcox to Wordsworth, or champagne to shandygaff.

In all these and a thousand other details you and I please ourselves and ask no one's leave. We have a whole kingdom in which we rule alone, can do what we choose, be wise or ridiculous, harsh or easy, conventional or odd. But directly we step out of that kingdom our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty. I might like to practise on the trombone from midnight till three in the morning. If I went on to the top of Helvellyn to do it I could please myself, but if I do it in my bedroom my family will object and if I do it out in the streets the neighbours will remind me that my liberty to blow the trombone must not interfere with their liberty to sleep in quiet. There are a lot of people in the world, and I have to accommodate my liberty to their liberties.

We are all liable to forget this, and unfortunately we are much more conscious of the imperfections of others in this respect than of our own.

I got into a railway carriage at a country station the other morning and settled down for what the schoolboys would call an hour's "swot" at a Blue-book. I was not reading it for pleasure. The truth is that I never do read Blue-books for pleasure. I read them as a barrister reads a brief, for the very humble purpose of turning an honest penny out of them. Now, if you are reading a book for pleasure it doesn't matter what is going on around you. I think I could enjoy "Tristram Shandy" or "Treasure Island" in the midst of an earthquake.

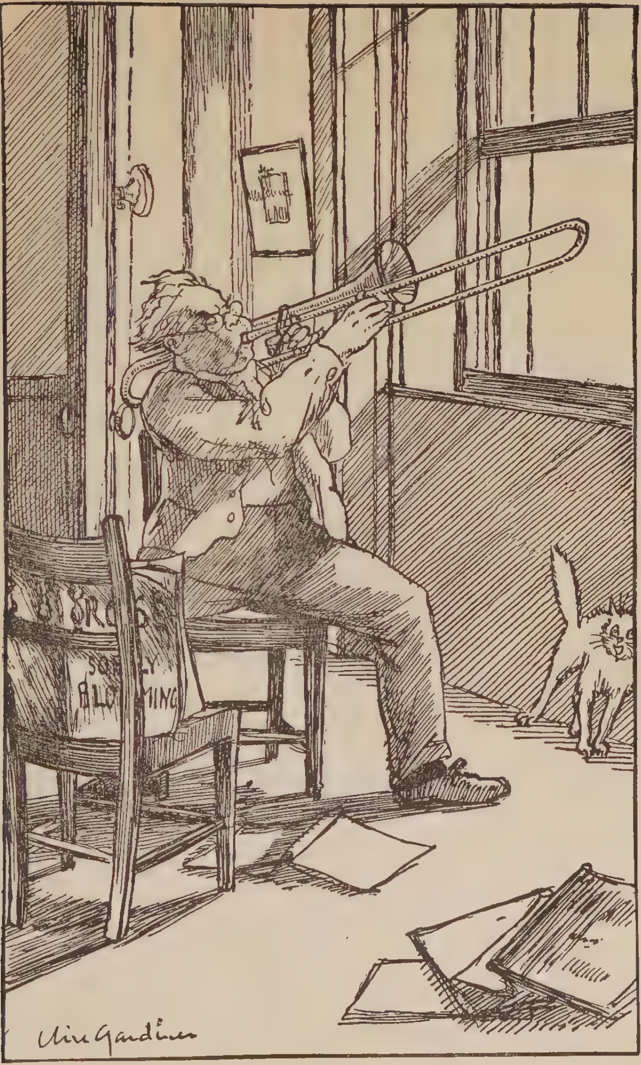
But when you are reading a thing as a task you need reasonable quiet, and that is what I didn't get, for at the next station in came a couple of men, one of whom talked to his friend for the rest of the journey in a loud and pompous voice. He was one of those people who remind one of that story of Horne Tooke who, meeting a person of immense swagger in the street, stopped him and said, "Excuse me, sir, but are you someone in particular?" This gentleman was someone in particular. As I wrestled with clauses and sections, his voice rose like a gale, and his family history, the deeds of his sons in the war, and his criticisms of the generals and the politicians submerged my poor attempts to hang on to my job. I shut up the Blue-book, looked out of the window, and listened wearily while the voice thundered on with themes like these: "Now what French ought to have done . . ." "The mistake the Germans made . . ." "If only Asquith had . . ." You know the sort of stuff. I had heard it all before, oh, so often. It was like a barrel-organ groaning out some banal song of long ago.

If I had asked him to be good enough to talk in a lower tone I daresay he would have thought I was a very rude fellow. It did not occur to him that anybody could have anything better to do than to listen to him, and I have no doubt he left the carriage convinced that everybody in it had, thanks to him, had a very illuminating journey, and would carry away a pleasing impression of his encyclopædic range. He was obviously a well-intentioned person. The thing that was wrong with him was that he had not the social sense. He was not "a clubbable man."

A reasonable consideration for the rights or feelings of others is the foundation of social conduct. It is commonly alleged against women that in this repect they are less civilised than men, and I am bound to confess that in my experience it is the woman—the well-dressed woman—who thrusts herself in front of you at the ticket office. The man would not attempt it, partly because he knows the thing would not be tolerated from him, but also because he has been better drilled in the small give-and-take of social relationships. He has lived more in the broad current of the world, where you have to learn to accommodate yourself to the general standard of conduct, and his school life, his club life, and his games have in this respect given him a training that women are only now beginning to enjoy.

I believe that the rights of small people and quiet people are as important to preserve as the rights of small nationalities. When I hear the aggressive, bullying horn which some motorists deliberately use, I confess that I feel something boiling up in me which is very like what I felt when Germany came trampling like a bully over Belgium. By what right, my dear sir, do you go along our highways uttering that hideous curse on all who impede your path? Cannot you announce your coming like a gentleman? Cannot you take your turn? Are you someone in particular or are you simply a hot gospeller of the prophet Nietzsche? I find myself wondering what sort of person it is who can sit behind that hog-like outrage without realising that he is the spirit of Prussia incarnate, and a very ugly spectacle in a civilised world.

And there is the more harmless person who has bought a very blatant gramophone, and on Sunday afternoon sets the thing going, opens the windows and fills the street with "Keep the Home Fires Burning" or some similar banality. What are the right limits of social behaviour in a matter of this sort? Let us take the trombone as an illustration again. Hazlitt said that a man who wanted to learn that fearsome instrument was entitled to learn it in his own house, even though he was a nuisance to his neighbours, but it was his business to make the nuisance as slight as possible. He must practise in the attic, and shut the window. He had no right to sit in his front room, open the window, and blow his noise into his neighbours' ears with the maximum of violence. And so with the gramophone. If you like the gramophone you are entitled to have it, but you are interfering with the liberties of your neighbours if you don't do what you can to limit the noise to your own household. Your neighbours may not like "Keep the Home Fires Burning." They



SORELY BLOOMING

"No right to sit in his front room, open the window and blow his noise into his neighbours' ears."

may prefer to have their Sunday afternoon undisturbed, and it is as great an impertinence for you to wilfully trespass on their peace as it would be to go, unasked, into their gardens and trample on their flower beds.

There are cases, of course, where the clash of liberties seems to defy compromise. My dear old friend X., who lives in a West End square and who is an amazing mixture of good nature and irascibility, flies into a passion when he hears a street piano, and rushes out to order it away. But near by lives a distinguished lady of romantic picaresque tastes, who dotes on street pianos, and attracts them as wasps are attracted to a jar of jam. Whose liberty in this case should surrender to the other? For the life of me I cannot say. It is as reasonable to like street pianos as to dislike them—and vice versa. I would give much to hear Sancho Panza's solution of such a nice riddle.

I suppose the fact is that we can be neither complete anarchists nor complete Socialists in this complex world—or rather we must be a judicious mixture of both. We have both liberties to preserve —our individual liberty and our social liberty. We must watch the bureaucrat on the one side and warn off the anarchist on the other. I am neither a Marxist, nor a Tolstoyan, but a compromise. I shall not permit any authority to say that my child must go to this school or that, shall specialise in science or arts, shall play rugger or soccer. These things are personal. But if I proceed to say that my child shall have no education at all, that he shall be brought up as a primeval savage, or at Mr. Fagin's academy for pickpockets, then Society will politely but firmly tell me that it has no use for primeval savages and a very stern objection to pickpockets, and that my child must have a certain minimum of education whether I like it or not. I cannot have the liberty to be a nuisance to my neighbours or make my child a burden and a danger to the commonwealth.

It is in the small matters of conduct, in the observance of the rule of the road, that we pass judgment upon ourselves, and declare that we are civilised or uncivilised. The great moments of heroism and sacrifice are rare. It is the little habits of commonplace intercourse that make up the great sum of life and sweeten or make bitter the journey. I hope my friend in the railway carriage will reflect on this. Then he will not cease, I am sure, to explain to his neighbour where French went wrong and where the Germans went ditto; but he will do it in a way that will permit me to read my Blue-book undisturbed.

ON THE INDIFFERENCE OF NATURE

THERE has never, I suppose, been a time when the moon had such a vogue as during the past ten days. For centuries, for thousands of years, for I know not what uncounted ages, she has been sailing the sky, "clustered around with all her starry fays." She has seen this tragi-comedy of man since the beginning, and I daresay will outlive its end. What she thinks of it all we shall never know. Perhaps she laughs at it, perhaps she weeps over it, perhaps she does both in turns, as you and I do. Perhaps she is only indifferent. Yes, I suppose she is indifferent, for she holds up her lamp for the just and the unjust, and lights the assassin's way as readily as the lover's and the shepherd's.

But in all her timeless journeyings around this flying ball to which we cling with our feet she has never been a subject of such painful concern as now. Lovesick poets have sung of her, and learned men have studied her countenance and made maps of her hills and her valleys, and children have been lulled to sleep with legends of the old man in the moon and the old woman eternally gathering her eternal sticks. But for most of us she had no more serious import than a Chinese lantern hung on a Christmas tree to please the children.

And suddenly she has become the most sensational fact of our lives. From the King in his palace to the pauper in his workhouse we have all been talking of the moon, and watching the moon and studying the phases of the moon. There are seven millions of Londoners who know more about the moon to-day than they ever dreamed there was to be known, or than they ever dreamed that they would want to know. John Bright once said that the only virtue of war was that it taught people geography, but even he did not think of the geography of the moon and of the firmament. But in the intense school of these days we are learning about everything in heaven above and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth. Count Zeppelin taught us about the stars, and now Herr von Gotha is giving us a lesson on the moon. We are not so grateful as we might be.

But the main lesson we are all learning, I think, is that Nature does not take sides in our affairs. We all like to think that she does take sides—that is, our side—that a special providence watches over us, and that invisible powers will see us through. It is a common weakness. The preposterous Kaiser exhibits it in its most grotesque assumption. He does really believe—or did, for dreadful doubts must be invading the armour-plated vanity of this jerry-built Cæsar—that God and Nature are his Imperial agents.

And in a less degree most of us, in times of stress, pin our faith to some special providence. We are so important to ourselves that we cannot conceive that we are unimportant to whatever powers there be. Others may fall, but we have charmed lives. Our cause must prevail because, being ours, it is beyond mortal challenge. A distinguished General was telling me not long ago of an incident in the second battle of Ypres. He stood with another General, since killed, watching the battle at its most critical phase. They saw the British line yield, and the Germans advance, and all seemed over. My friend put up his glasses with the gesture of one who knew the worst had come. His companion turned to him and said, "God will never allow those —— to win." It was an odd expression of faith, but it represents the conviction latent in most of us that we can count on invisible allies who, like the goddess in Homer, will intervene if we are in straits, and fling a cloud between us and the foe.

This reliance on the supernatural is one of the sources of power in men of primitive and intense faith. Cromwell was a practical mystic and never forgot to keep his powder dry, but he saw the hand of the Lord visibly at work for his cause on the winds and the tempest and that conviction added a fervour to his terrible sword. In his letter to Speaker Lenthall on the battle of Dunbar he tells how in marching from Musselburgh to Haddington the enemy fell upon "the rear-forlorn of our horse" and "had like to have engaged our rear-brigade of horse with their whole army—*had not the Lord by His Providence put a cloud over the Moon,* thereby giving us opportunity to draw off those horse to the rest of our army."

In the same way Elizabethan England witnessed God Himself in the tempest that scattered the Armada, and a hundred years later the people saw the same Divine sanction in the winds that brought William Prince of Orange to our shores and drove his pursuers away. "The weather had indeed served the Protestant cause so well," says Macaulay, "that some men of more piety than judgment fully believed the ordinary laws of nature to have been suspended for the preservation of the liberty and religion of England. Exactly a hundred years before, they said, the Armada, invincible by man, had been scattered by the wrath of God. Civil freedom and divine truth were again in jeopardy; and again the obedient elements had fought for the good cause. The wind had blown strong from the east while the Prince wished to sail down the Channel, had turned to the south when he wished to enter Torbay, had sunk to a calm during the disembarkation, and, as soon as the disembarkation was completed, had risen to a storm and had met the pursuers in the face."

If we saw such a sequence of winds blowing for our cause we should, in spite of Macaulay, allow our piety to have the better of our judgment. Indeed, there have been those who in the absence of more solid evidence have accepted the Angels of Mons with as touching and unquestioning a faith as they accepted the legend of the Army of Russians from Archangel. Perhaps it is not "piety" so much as anxiety that accounts for this credulity. In its more degraded form it is responsible for such phenomena as the revival of fortune telling and the emergence of the Prophet Bottomley. In its more reputable expression it springs from the conviction of the justice of our cause, of the dominion of the spiritual over the material and of the witness of that dominion in the operations of Nature.

Then comes this wonderful harvest moon with its clear sky and its still air to light our enemies to their villainous work and to remind us that, however virtuous our cause, Nature is not concerned about us. She is indifferent whether we win or lose. She is not against us, but she is not for us. Sometimes she helps the enemy, and sometimes she helps us. She blew a snowstorm in the face of the Germans on the most critical day of Verdun, and helped to defeat that great adventure. In August last she came out on the side of the enemy. She rained and blew ceaselessly, and disarranged our plans in Flanders, so that the attack on which so much depended was driven perilously late into the year. And even the brilliant moon and the cloudless nights that have been so disturbing to us in London speak the same language of Nature's impartiality. They serve the enemy here, but they are serving us far more just across the sea, where every bright day and moonlit night snatched from the mud and rain of the coming winter is of priceless value to our Army. That consideration should enable us to bear our affliction with fortitude as we crowd the "tubes" or listen to the roar of the guns from under the domestic table.

But we must admit, on the evidence, that Nature does not care twopence who wins, and is as unconcerned about our affairs as we are about the affairs of a nest of ants that we tread on without knowing that we have trodden on it. She is beyond good and evil. She has no morals and is indifferent about justice and what men call right and wrong. She blasts the wise and leaves the foolish to flourish.

> Nature, with equal mind
> Sees all her sons at play;
> Sees man control the wind,
> The wind sweep man away;
> Allows the proudly riding and the found'ring barque.

It is a chill, but a chastening thought. It leaves us with a sense of loneliness, but it brings with it, also, a sense of power, the power of the unconquerable human spirit, self-dependent and self-reliant, reaching out to ideals beyond itself, beyond its highest hope of attainment, broken on the wheel of intractable things, but still stumbling forward by its half-lights in search of some Land of Promise that always skips just beyond the horizon.

Happily the moon is skipping beyond the horizon too. Frankly, we have seen enough of her face to last us for a long time. When she comes again let her clothe herself in good fat clouds and bring the winds in her train. We do not like to think of her as a mere flunkey of the Kaiser and the torch-bearer of his assassins.

IF JEREMY CAME BACK

It is the agreeable illusion of the theatre that life is a rounded tale. We pay our money at the box, go in, see the story begin, progress and end, sadly or cheerfully, and come away with the discords resolved, virtue exalted and villainy abased, and the tangled skein of things neatly unravelled. And so home, content. But on the stage of life there is none of this satisfying completeness and finish. We enter in the midst of a very ancient drama, spend our years in trying to pick up the threads and purport of the action, and go as inopportunely as we came. The curtain does not descend punctually upon an exhausted plot and an accomplished purpose. It descends upon a thrilling but unfinished tale. You have got, perhaps, into the most breathless part of the action, seized at last the clue that will assuredly explain the mystery, when suddenly and irrationally the light fails, and for you the theatre is dark for ever. Your emotions have been stirred, your curiosity awakened, your sympathies aroused in vain. Even the episode you have been permitted to witness is left with ragged ends and unfinished judgments.

How did it proceed and how did it end, and what was the sequel? Was virtue or villainy triumphant? Who was the real hero? Were your sympathies on the right side or the wrong? And, more personally, what of those shoots of life you have thrown out to the challenge of the future? Did they wilt or flourish, and what was their fortune? These are among the thousand questions to which we should like an answer, and there is nothing unreasonable in thinking that we may have an answer.

It would be enough to satisfy the curiosity of most of us to have the privilege which Jeremy Bentham confessed that he would like to enjoy. That amiable and industrious philosopher, having spent a blameless life in the development of his comfortable gospel of the "greatest good of the greatest number," entertained the pleasant fancy of returning to the scene of his labours once in every hundred years to see humanity marching triumphantly to the heavenly city of Utilitarianism, along the straight and smooth turnpike road that he had fashioned for its ease and direction. He had the touching confidence of the idealist that humanity only had to be shown the way out of the wilderness to plunge into it with joyous shouts, and hurry along it with eager enthusiasm. And since he had shown the way all would henceforth be well. It is this confidence which makes the idealist an object of pity to the cynic. For the cynic is often only the idealist turned sour. He is the idealist disillusioned by loss of faith, not in his ideals, but in humanity.

This is about the time when Jeremy might be expected back on his first centennial visit to see how we have got along the road to human perfectibility. I can imagine him, poised in the unapparent, looking with round-eyed astonishment upon the answer which a century of time has given, to his anticipations. This, the New Jerusalem of his confident vision? This shambles the harvest of a hundred years of progress? And the cynic beside him, tapping his ghostly snuff-box, observes dryly, "They don't seem to have got very far on the way, friend Jeremy; not very far on the way." I can conceive the philosopher returning sadly to the Elysian fields, wondering whether, after all, these visits are worth while. If this is the achievement of a hundred years' enjoyment of the philosophy of Utilitarianism, what unthinkable revelation may await him on his next visit? Perhaps . . . yes, perhaps, it will be better to stay away.

But all the answers of time will not be so disquieting. It is probable, for example, that Benjamin Franklin will enjoy his visit immensely. He will find much to delight his curious and adventurous mind. I see him watching the flying machines as joyously as a child and as fondly as a parent. For among his multitudinous activities he experimented with balloons and suffered the gibes of the foolish. Why, asked his critic, did he waste his time over these childish things? What, in the name of heaven, was the use of balloons? And Benjamin made the immortal reply, "What is the use of a newborn baby?" If he is among the presences who watch the events of to-day he will be almost as astonished as his critics to see the dimensions his "newborn baby" has grown to. He will be astonished at other things. He will recall the day when, in his fine flowered-silk garment, he entered, as the delegate of the insurgent farmers of New England, the reception of the great,—was it not in Downing Street?—and was spat upon by the noble lords, to whose dim vision the future of the newborn baby across the Atlantic was undecipherable. He will recall how he put his outraged garment away, never to wear it again until he had signed the Declaration of Independence. And now, what miracle is this? England and America reconciled at last. England, no less than France, straining her eyes across the Atlantic for the relief that is hastening to her help in the extremest peril of her history from the giant by whose unquiet cradle he played his part a century and a half ago. . . . Well, no one will rejoice more at the reconciliation or watch the tide of relief streaming across the ocean with more good will than Benjamin, who deplored the breach with England as much as anybody. But the noble lords who spat on him. . . .

And I can see Napoleon, with his unpleasant familiarity, pinching the spiritual ears of the French scientists of his day and saying, "How now, gentlemen? What do you say to the steamboat now?" Poor wretches, how humiliated they will be. For when Napoleon asked the Académie des Sciences to report as to the possibilities of the newly invented steamboat, their verdict was, "Idée folle, erreur grossière absurdité." They saw in it only a foolish toy, and not a newborn baby destined to be the giant who is performing such prodigies on the seas of the world to-day.

But it is not the scientists who will need to hang their heads before the revelations that await them. They will look on with the complacency of those who see the mighty harvest of their sowing. Perhaps among the presences who surround them they may descry a bulky man, with rolling gait, whom they knew in their day on earth as the intellectual autocrat of his generation and who levelled the shafts of his wit at their foolish experiments. They will have lost the very human frailty of retaliation if they do not remind him of some of those shafts that, to the admiring circle which sat at his feet, seemed so well-directed and piercing. Perhaps they will read this to him:

> Some turn the wheel of electricity, some suspend rings to a loadstone and find that what they did yesterday they can do again to-day. Some register the changes of the wind, and die fully convinced that the wind is changeable. There are men yet more profound, who have heard that two colourless liquors may produce a colour by union, and that two cold bodies will grow hot if they are mingled; they mingle them, and produce the effect expected, say it is strange, and mingle them again.

Admirable old boy! What wit you had! We can still enjoy it even though time has turned it to foolishness and planted its barb in your own breast.

All your roaring, sir, will not take the barb out. All your genius for argument will not prevail against the witness you see of the mighty fruits of those little experiments that filled your Olympian mind with scorn. But you will have your compensations. Even you will be astonished at the place you fill in our thoughts so long after your queer figure and brown wig were last seen in Fleet Street. You will find that the very age in which you lived is remembered as the Age of Johnson, and that the thunders of your voice, transmitted by the faithful Bozzy, are among the immortal reverberations from the past. Yes, sir, in spite of the scientists, you will go back very well content with your visit.

And it may be that the victory of the scientists will assuage the disappointment of Jeremy himself. It is possible that when, back once more in whatever region of heaven is reserved for philosophers, he begins to reflect on all he has seen, Jeremy will recover his spirits. This moral catastrophe of man, he will say, must be seen in relation to his astonishing intellectual victory. I forgot that stage in the journey to the heavenly city of Utilitarianism. This century that has passed has witnessed that stage. It has been a period of inconceivable triumph over matter. Man has discovered all the wonders of the earth and is dazzled and drunk with the conquest of things. His moral and social sense has not been able to keep pace with this breathless material development. He has lost his spiritual bearings in the midst of the gigantic machine that his genius has fashioned.

He has become the slave of his own creation, the victim of the monster of his invention, and this calamity into which he has fallen is his blind effort to readjust his life to the new scheme of things that the machine has imposed on him. The great parturition is upon him and he is shedding gouts of blood in his agony. But he will emerge from his pains. The material century is accomplished; the conquest of the machine is at hand, and with that conquest the moral sense of man will revive with a grandeur undreamed of in the past. The march is longer than I thought, but it will gain impetus and majesty from this immense overthrow. The road I built was only premature. Man was not ready to take it. But it is still there—a little grass-grown and neglected, but still beckoning him on to the earthly paradise. When he rises from his wrestle in the dark, his sight will clear and he will surely take it. . . . Yes, I think I shall go back after all. . . .

Unteachable old optimist, murmurs the cynic at his side.

ON SLEEP AND THOUGHT

In the middle of last night I found myself suddenly and quite acutely awake. It is an unusual experience for me. I knew the disturbance had not come from without myself, but from within—from some low but persistent knocking at the remote door of consciousness. Who was the knocker? I ran over the possible visitors before opening the door just as one sometimes puzzles over the writing of an address before opening a letter. Ah, yes, the disquieting discovery I had made yesterday—that was the intruder. And, saying this, I opened the door and let the fellow in, to sit upon my pillow and lord it over me in the darkness. I had succeeded in suppressing him before I went to bed—burying him beneath talk about this and that, some variations of Rameau, a few of those Hungarian songs from Korbay's collection, so incomparable in their fierce energy and passion, and so on; the mound nicely rounded off with Duruy's "History of France," and the headstone of sleep duly erected. Now, I thought, I shall hear nothing more of him until I face him squarely to-morrow. And here, up from the depths he had come and taken his seat upon the headstone itself.

It is with sleep as with affairs. One cracked bell will shatter a whole ring; one scheming, predatory power will set the whole world in flames. And one disorderly imp of the mind will upset the whole comity of sleep. He will neither slumber forgetfully nor play with the others in dreams, turning the realities and solemnities of the day into a wild travesty of fun or agony, in which everything that is incredible seems as natural as sneezing, and you stand on your head on the cross of St. Paul's or walk up the Strand carrying your head under your arm without any sense of surprise or impropriety. Nor is he one of those obliging subjects of the mind who obey their orders like a sensible housedog, sleeping with one eye open and ready to bark, as it were, if anything goes wrong. You know that sort of decent fellow. You say to him overnight, "Now, remember, I have that train to catch in the morning, and I must be awake without fail at seven." Or it may be six, or four. And whatever the hour you name, sure enough the good dog barks in time. If he has a failing, it is barking too soon and leaving you to discuss the nice question whether you dare go to sleep again or whether you had better remain awake. In the midst of which you probably go to sleep again and miss your train.

This control of the kingdom of sleep by the apparently dormant consciousness can be carried far. A friend of mine tells me that he has even learned to put his dreams under the check of conscious or sub-conscious thought. He had one persistent dream which took the form of missing the train. Sometimes his wife was on board, and he rushed on to the platform just in time to see the train in motion and her head out of the window with agony written on her face. Sometimes he was in the train and his wife just missed it. Sometimes they were both inside, but saw their luggage being brought up too late. Sometimes the luggage got in and they didn't. Always something went wrong. He determined to have that dream regularised. And so before going to bed he thought hard of catching the train. He saturated himself with the idea of catching the train. And the thing worked like a charm. He never misses a train now, nor his wife, nor his luggage. They all steam away on their dream journeys together without a hitch. So he tells me, and I believe him, for he is a truthful man.

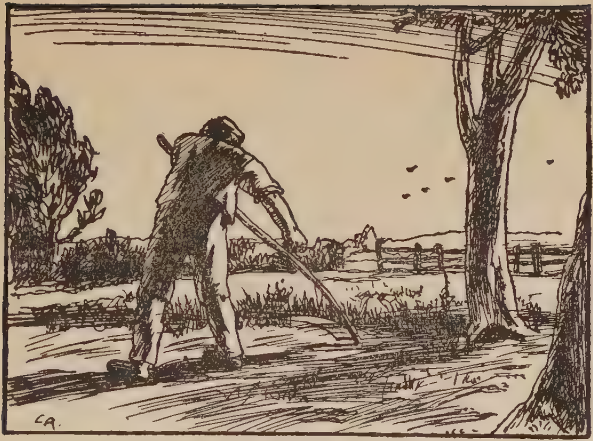
You and I, and I suppose everybody, have had evidence of this sub-conscious operation in sleep. That it is common enough is shown by the familiar saying, "I will sleep on it." I have gone to bed more than once with problems that have seemed insoluble, have fallen to sleep, and have wakened in the morning with the course so clear that I have wondered how I could have been in doubt. And Sir Edward Clarke in his reminiscences of the Bar tells how, after a night over his briefs he would go to bed with his way through the tangle obscure and perplexing, and would wake from sleep with the path plain as a pike staff. The phenomenon is doubtless due in some measure to rest. The mind clears in sleeping as muddy water clears in standing. But this is not the whole explanation. Some process has taken place in the interval far down in the hinterlands of thought. You may observe this even in your waking hours. Lord Leverhulme, who I suppose has one of the biggest letter-bags in the country, once told me that his habit in dealing with his correspondence is to answer at once those letters he can reply to offhand, and to put aside those that need consideration. When he turns to the latter he finds the answers have fashioned themselves without any conscious act of thought. This experience is not uncommon, and as it occurs when the mind is at the maximum of activity it disposes of the idea that rest is the complete explanation.

More goes on in us than we know. At this moment I am conscious of at least six strata of thought. I am attending to this writing, the shaping of the letters, the spelling of the words; I am thinking what I shall write; I am sensible that a thrush is singing outside, and that the sun is shining; this pervades my mind with the glow of the thought that in a few days I shall be in the beechwoods; through this happy glow the ugly imp who sat on my pillow last night forces himself on my attention; down below there is the boom of the great misery of the world that goes on ceaselessly like the deep strum of the double bass in the orchestra. And out of sight and consciousness there are, I suspect, deeper and more obscure functions shaping all sorts of things in the unfathomed caves of the mind. The results will come to the surface in due course, and I shall wonder where they came from. It is a mistake to suppose that we can only think of one thing at a time. The mind can keep as many balls circulating as Cinquevalli. It can keep some of them circulating without knowing that they even exist.

But these profound functions of the mind that know no sleep, and yet do not disturb our sleep, are not to be confused with that imp of the pillow. He is a brawler of the day. He brings the noisy world of fact into the cloistered calm or the playground of sleep. He is known to all of us, but most of all to the criminal who has still got a conscience. Macbeth knew him—"Macbeth hath murdered sleep, the innocent sleep." Eugene Aram knew him:—

> And a mighty wind had swept the leaves
> And still the corpse was bare.

I know him. . . . And that reminds me. It is time I went and had it out with my imp of the pillow in the daylight.



ON MOWING

I HAVE hung the scythe up in the barn and now I am going to sing its praises. And if you doubt my competence to sing on so noble a theme come with me into the orchard, smell the new mown hay, mark the swathes where they lie, and note the workmanship. Yes, I admit that over there by the damson trees and down by the fence there is a sort of unkempt, dishevelled appearance about the grass as though it had been stabbed and tortured by some insane animal armed with an axe. It is true. It has been stabbed and tortured by an insane animal. It was there that I began. It was there that I hacked and hewed, perspired and suffered. It was there that I said things of which in my calmer moments I should disapprove. It was there that I served my apprenticeship to the scythe. But let your eye scan gently that stricken pasture and pause here where the orchard slopes to the paddock. I do not care who looks at this bit. I am prepared to stand or fall by it. It speaks for itself. The signature of the master hand is here. It is my signature.

And having written that signature I feel like the wounded soldier spoken of by the "Wayfarer" in the *Nation*. He was returning to England, and as he looked from the train upon the cheerful Kentish landscape and saw the haymakers in the fields he said, "I feel as though I should like to cut grass all the rest of my life." I do not know whether it was the craftsman in him that spoke. Perhaps it was only the beautiful sanity and peace of the scene, contrasted with the squalid nightmare he had left behind, that wrung the words from him. But they were words that anyone who has used a scythe would echo. I echo them. I feel that I could look forward joyfully to an eternity of sunny days and illimitable fields of waving grass and just go on mowing and mowing and mowing for ever. I am chilled by the thought that you can only play the barber to nature once, or at most twice a year. I look back over the summers of the past, and lament my wasted opportunities. What meadows I might have mown had I only known the joy of it.

For mowing is the most delightful disguise that work can wear. When once you have got the trick of it, it goes with a rhythm that is intoxicating. The scythe, which looked so ungainly and unmanageable a tool, gradually changes its character. It becomes an instrument of infinite flexibility and delicacy. The lines that seemed so uncouth and clownish are discovered to be the refinement of time. What centuries of accumulated experience under the suns of what diverse lands have gone to the perfecting of this most ancient tool of the fields, shaping the blade so cunningly, adjusting it to the handle at so artful an angle, disposing the nebs with such true relationship to the action of the body, so that, skilfully used, the instrument loses the sense of weight and seems to carry you forward by its own smooth, almost instinctive motion. It is like an extension of yourself, with a touch as fine as the brush of a butterfly's wing and a stroke as bold and resistless as the sweep of a cataract. It is no longer a clumsy, blundering, dead thing, but as obedient as your hand and as conscious as your touch. You seem to have developed a new member, far-reaching, with the edge of a scimitar, that will flick off a daisy or fell a forest of stalwart grasses.

And as the intimacy grows you note how the action simplifies itself. The violent stabbings and discords are resolved into a harmony as serene as a pastoral symphony. You feel the rhythm taking shape, and as it develops the body becomes captive to its own task. You are no longer manipulating a tool. You and the tool have become magically one, fused in a common intelligence, so that you hardly know whether you swing the scythe or the scythe bears you forward on its own strong, swimming stroke. The mind, released, stands aloof in a sort of delighted calm, rejoicing in a spectacle in which it has ceased to have a conscious part, noting the bold swing of the body backwards for the stroke (the blade lightly skimming the ground, as the oar gently flatters the water in its return), the delicate play of the wrist as the scythe comes into action, the "swish" that tells that the stroke is true and clean, the thrust from the waist upwards that carries it clear, the dip of the blade that leaves the swathe behind, the moderate, timely, exact movement of the feet preparatory to the next stroke, the low, musical hum of the vibrating steel. A frog hops out in alarm at the sudden invasion of his secrecy among the deep grasses. You hope he won't get in the way of that terrible finger, but you are drunk with the rhythm of the scythe and are swept along on its imperious current. You are no longer a man, but a motion. The frog must take his chance. Swish—swish—swish——

Not that the rhythm is unrelieved. It has its "accidentals." You repeat a stroke that has not pleased you, with a curious sense of pleasure at the interrupted movement which has yet not changed the theme; you nip off a tuft here or there as the singer throws in a stray flourish to garland the measure; you trim round the trees with the pleasant feeling that you can make this big thing do a little thing so deftly; you pause to whet the blade with the hone. But all the time the song of the scythe goes on. It fills your mind and courses through your blood. Your pulse beats to the rhythmic swish—swish—swish, and to that measure you pass into a waking sleep in which the hum of bees and the song of lark and cuckoo seem to belong to a dream world through which you are floating, bound to a magic oar.

The sun climbs the heavens above the eastward hills, goes regally overhead, and slopes to his setting beyond the plain. You mark the shadows shorten and lengthen as they steal round the trees. A thrush sings ceaselessly through the morning from a beech tree on the other side of the lane, falls silent during the heat of the afternoon and begins again as the shadows lengthen and a cool wind comes out of the west. Overhead the swifts are hawking in the high air for their evening meal. Presently they descend and chase each other over the orchard with the curious sound of an indrawn whistle that belongs to the symphony of late summer evenings.

You are pleasantly conscious of these pleasant things as you swing to the measured beat of the scythe, and your thoughts play lightly with kindred fancies, snatches of old song, legends of long ago, Ruth in the fields of Boaz, and Horace on his Sabine farm, the sonorous imagery of Israel linking up the waving grasses with the life of man and the scythe with the reaper of a more august harvest.

The plain darkens, and the last sounds of day fall on the ear, the distant bark of a dog, the lowing of cattle in the valley, the intimate gurglings of the thrush settling for the night in the nest, the drone of a winged beetle blundering through the dusk, one final pure note of the white throat. There is still light for this last slope to the paddock. Swish—swish—swish. . . .

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